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The Hudson Review

A magazine of literature and the arts

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TO OUR READERS

VERNON YOUNG (1912-1986), for many years *The Hudson Review*'s film reviewer, died in Philadelphia on August 22. Young was first published in *The Hudson Review* in 1948, and began doing film reviews for us regularly in 1955. He also wrote numerous book reviews for *The Hudson Review*, his specialties being poetry, biography and travel writing. A man of fastidious taste and elegant manners, Young was, as a critic, totally independent of fashion and totally devoted to excellence—on the screen as well as on the printed page. He set a standard hard to equal.

MARVIN MUDRICK (1921-1986), an essayist and reviewer who published more individual contributions in *The Hudson Review* than any other writer, died in Santa Barbara on October 24. Mudrick's first piece in *The Hudson Review*, published in our Spring 1953 issue, was a review of a newly translated edition of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*; his last contribution to our pages, his 103rd, appears in the current issue. As a man, Mudrick was eccentric, opinionated and warmly humorous. As a critic, he was outstanding for his wide learning, his formidable wit, and his dedication to literature seen as rooted in real life and in living human experience. As a master critic and appreciator of the moral sanity and vigor of such writers as Chaucer and Samuel Johnson, Mudrick was also possessed of a consuming interest in all aspects of the human scene past and present. He was generally acknowledged to be one of the nation's greatest book reviewers.

These two writers have over the years become identified with *The Hudson Review*—with our aims, our standards and our achievements. They will be sorely missed.

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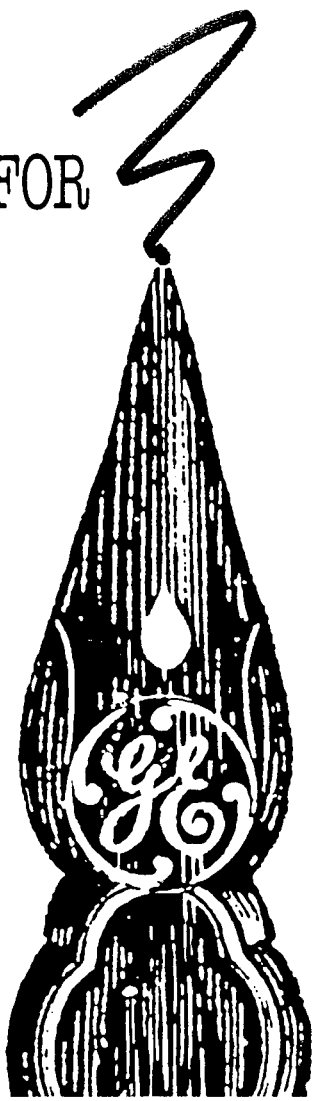

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BERT O. STATES

Hamlet's Older Brother

Reading Shakespeare you now and then get a particularly strong impression of having met one of his characters in an earlier form. Partly this is a matter of general style (Shakespeare always reminds you of Shakespeare) and partly a matter of character typology (Iago might remind you of Aaron); but more specifically it has to do with recurrent combinations of character traits and situations within the closed field of Shakespeare's practice—which is simply to say that Shakespeare, like any artist (including the actors who play him), will tend to solve similar problems by similar means, nothing succeeding like success; so that, overall, we find operating in the canon a principle of natural selection, if not recombinant genetics, whereby the successful "genes" of one character are passed along and adapted to the characters that follow.

For some time, at least since the Olivier films (and perhaps in part because of them) I have had this feeling about Prince Hal and Hamlet: no two Shakespeare heroes seem to me more alike in temperament and tempo.[1] To some readers this may seem far-fetched. How can one possibly pair two such different *kinds* of characters, one a tragic figure, the other a sometime creature of comedy and a highly successful king who dies peacefully in bed (off stage), "a king bless'd by the King of kings"? Hamlet, it will be said, reaches depths of thought and mood far beyond Hal's sensibility. Hal, on the

[1] Obviously I am not the first to make the connection between Prince Hal and Hamlet, but I have been unable to find any extended comparisons. G. R. Hibbard's "'Henry IV' and 'Hamlet'" (*Shakespeare Survey* 30 [1977], pp. 1-12) contrasts Falstaff and Hamlet but does not discuss any possible relation between Hal and Hamlet. Peter B. Erickson ("The Fault/My Father Made: The Anxious Pursuit of Heroic Fame in Shakespeare's HENRY V," *Modern Language Studies* 10, i [1979-80], pp. 10-25) sees Hal and Hamlet as divided heroes who share a common tension between the needs of self and the call of duty. Francis Fergusson compares Hal to Hamlet, in passing, as fellow role-players (*Shakespeare: The Pattern in His Carpet* [New York, 1970], p. 104).

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other hand, is the complete politician who moves in a world troubled by factions and rebel uprisings rather than by hidden impostumes and terminal questions, and unlike Hamlet he is heavily given to the praise of God and the rhetoric of office, or what Hamlet would disparagingly call "fair" speaking. Still, at bottom there is something oddly fraternal about the two and I would like to examine the possibilities here, not to prove that Shakespeare re-cycled his creations but to see what may be involved in the elusive technique of characterization that may make such an impression possible. If we can see what sorts of things are transmitted—these things I have called genes—then perhaps we can come closer to the source of the life in the design and to what it is about these two characters in particular that gives us so many interesting problems.

Let me begin by pursuing further what I take to be the basis of the resemblance. I am not convinced, first off, that Hal is as simple and as "political" as some of his commentators claim, and I suspect that somewhere beneath Hamlet's melancholy and spleen is a natural politician—or rather that his qualities of mind and bearing would have made him an excellent king, had he been put on, or if spite had cursed him with a problem of governance and conquest rather than one of filial retribution. Two very big 'ifs' of course. To return to my genetic metaphor, Hal and Hamlet are not clones, but more like brothers who have gone their ways to separate destinies, carrying much the same personal style and wit, the same system of preferences and values, much the same view of what is good or detestable, and most significantly the same degree of detachment from the world. They are the intimates of no one, though the case of Horatio might lead you to think otherwise. Moreover, it is easy to put them in each other's place: you can imagine the sort of reaction Hal might have to Laertes (who has a touch of Hotspur in him), or to Polonius, or Hamlet to Falstaff back in the untroubled university days. You can imagine Hal talking to the players and giving them precisely Hamlet's advice because, like Hamlet, he is on a stage himself most of the time. You can see why Hal might "elect" Horatio as his friend or how he would deal with Osric or with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had Henry sent them

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to spy on him at the Boar's Head, or how the first Gravedigger would deal with Hal, who got a taste of this same grave medicine on St. Crispin's eve from Will Williams—which is to say that if there is one voice in the kingdom capable of one-upping the Hal/Hamlet intelligence it is that of the earthy absolutist who delves below philosophy to the irrefutable facts of death.

As my examples illustrate, part of my sense of the family resemblance between the two arises from a resemblance in the plots themselves—assuming we ignore *Henry V* for the moment and think of the two parts of *Henry IV* as one long play. Both *Hamlet* and the *Henry IV* plays are, to a striking degree, variations on the theme of the education of the prince, featuring, in each case, a prince who, for reasons of his own, hangs back from responsibility and spends himself in forms of behavior that are socially errant or antic. In gross terms, Hamlet and Prince Hal are in the same situation, the distinction resting roughly on the difference between the problem of killing a king and the problem of becoming one.

In fact, one wonders if Shakespeare may not have experienced a degree of déjà vu when he sat down to write *Hamlet* at the turn of the century. That is: could this faint analogue of the Hamlet situation—the "truant to chivalry" theme—have provided him with the characterological cartoon for his portrait of the truant to revenge? And one wonders—since, as we now suspect, the brain thinks primarily in terms of models and the associative pairing of shapes and structures—if Shakespeare may not consciously or unconsciously have solved some of his dramaturgic problems respecting heroic truancy and the waiting game in *Hamlet* by adapting certain successes he had achieved with the other character energies in *The Henriad*. To be more specific: the father-son theme with its heavy emphasis on "the debt" to be paid by the prodigal son; the massive Falstaff theme with its emphasis on playing roles, putting on disguises, plotting and counterplotting, which is reflected in the deviousness and "playfulness" of the middle acts of *Hamlet*. Themes obviously reduce to structures and while I wish to draw only the most general of structural parallels, I suggest that a certain kind of tension calls for a certain kind of plotting and characterization. If a dramatist

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would locate his argument between the poles of duty and dereliction, and expect to keep the heroic energy alive within it, he must find ways to make the dereliction interesting, morally profitable to his hero, and morally acceptable to his audience (which will accept almost anything in a dramatic hero, including murder, except cowardice or weakness of spirit). Hence, the accumulation, in the rotund middles of these plays, of "democratic" experience, the suggestion that the foundation of kingliness is the firmer for having been laid on common ground—the company of soldiers one knows by name, players, good friends, genial ne'er-do-wells, and the general gender. And of course one way to forestall the audience's questions during this educative interval would be to have the hero raise the questions himself; in other words, to promise reform—

> I know you all, and will a while uphold
> The unyok'd humour of your idleness . . .

or

> Why, what an ass am I!
> . . . About my brains. . . . —

but to leave the particulars of how and when out of sight in the unwritten privacy of the hero's mind.

Let us look more closely at this interplay of character and plot. Clearly, the most important common denominator of the two plots is that Hal and Hamlet are stuck in what Jan Kott calls an imposed situation. Unlike other Shakespeare heroes their drama does not originate in an act of will or judgment that gets them into difficulty but in their reaction to something thrust upon them from without. One might suppose, then, that a major challenge in writing the *Henry IV* plays and *Hamlet*—as opposed, say, to *Richard II* and *III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, or any of the later tragedies—was to find a sufficiently dramatic channel for the hero's self-expression. One way to make an interesting protagonist out of an essentially good prince who has nothing much to do but what others have planned for him is to throw the emphasis of the plot onto an enigma of character—not a flaw, in the sense of mor-

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al deficiency, but a resistance to his situation, much like the resistance in an electric circuit, that will constitute his act of being himself, or being what we would today call "his own man." In other words, the dramatic center would be shifted to a friction, rather than a harmony, between character and the deed that is to arise from it. Such plays, I suspect, are relatively rare, at least until the modern era of alienation (when deviance becomes a form of virtue), but this is what Shakespeare was doing in *The Henriad* and in *Hamlet* and it produces a play that is filled with indirection and reaction and overcharged by a schizophrenic energy at the center of which we have a protagonist, surrounded by a perplexed court, in whom we can never quite locate the person under the performer. It is what we might, in fact, call a virtuoso play: its plot is designed to route the protagonist through scenes that display the range and energy of his character. This may seem a superfluous thing to say about any Shakespeare play because he rarely does otherwise. What I mean is that in Hal and Hamlet he seems to be unusually concerned with the portraiture of heroes who are remarkable not for their mistakes or their hubris but for the shock and spectacle of their personalities.

I take as my text in this vein a conspicuous speech in *2 Henry IV*, one of the many word portraits of Hal in the plays, in which Henry IV is advising his other son, Clarence, to "blunt not" his brother's love:

> For he is gracious, if he be observ'd;
> He hath a tear for pity, and a hand
> Open as day for [melting] charity;
> Yet notwithstanding, being incens'd, he's flint,
> As humorous as winter, and as sudden
> As flaws congealed in the spring of day.
> His temper, therefore, must be well observ'd.
> Chide him for faults, and do it reverently
> When you perceive his blood inclin'd to mirth;
> But, being moody, give him time and scope,
> Till that his passions, like a whale on ground,
> Confound themselves with working.
>
> IV, iv, 30-41

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The main purpose of this passage is to jack up the tensions in preparation for the big scene to follow between the Prince and his dying father. What happens next is that Henry learns that the Prince, the late hero of Shrewsbury, is not hunting at Windsor, as he had been led to believe, but dining with Poins and "his continual followers" in London. In short, Harry the Reformed has once again given way to Harry the Wild. This brings the King one further lament closer to death and Warwick to one further defense of the son by way of cheering the father up. In other words, one further scene, in a long series, in which the character of the Prince is the focal irritant that drives the plot.

But the passage is curious. It is not often that you get such a thorough character analysis in one chunk and there is a roundabout-ness in the way Shakespeare manages to get it in, almost as if he were trying to clarify the character of Hal for *us* by clarifying it for one of the characters. In any case, the speech is one that actors might pay special attention to, for it strikes one as being a recipe for how to play Hal. Here his character is conceived as an unstable succession of moods and humours passing, like the English weather, between the extremes of grace, pity, and charity, on the virtuous side, and caprice, temper, and passion on the volatile side. Both of the *Henry IV* plays have given us some of everything on this menu except perhaps the beached whale, but even that fits the portrait if we look ahead to *Henry V* and the passion with which Hal descends on Scroop, Grey, and Cambridge or on the French prisoners at Agincourt.

But the passage is an even better description of Hamlet (and a style for playing him)! Here is exactly the sort of advice Gertrude may have given Ophelia for coping with her madcap son had things turned out as she had "hop'd." For Hamlet's character is essentially a murkier prolongation of this same "working" of "sudden" and "humorous" extremes, whereby (for example) Hamlet's "congealed" hatred for his enemies in the nunnery scene will give way, predictably, to the grace and modesty of his good judgment in the advice to the players and Horatio scenes directly following. The main interest of the plot, in effect, is: which Hamlet will strike

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next? Will it be, as Patrick Cruttwell would put it, the "sweet prince" or the "arrant knave"?[2]

As I see it, here is the main sense in which Hamlet and Hal differ from other Shakespearean heroes. The others (to borrow Isaiah Berlin's figure) are, like hedgehogs, tunnel-bound in their single and peculiar actions; they have room for only one order of passions. Macbeth never laughs, Othello never philosophizes, Lear never rules, and certainly none of them ever has the time to play games of hide-and-seek, put on plays, or talk at length about such unpressing universal matters as fortune, death, the firmament, the crown, majesty or ceremony. All of the slack of life is taken up in the consuming pathos of usurpation, cuckoldry, and paternal outrage. It is not by any means that they are less interesting men, but that their behavior is all of a piece. They are what we might call creatures of consequence, all busy with destiny, all caught up in the boisterous descent of fortune's massy wheel.

Against these great monoliths—and we could go on listing their hedgehog brethren from the histories and romances—stand the foxes, Prince Hal and Hamlet, who know, and can do and *be* many things to many people. Among the great heroes they are Shakespeare's true *histriones* and their nearest counterparts can be found only among the villains where supreme self-confidence, wit, and intelligence are continually "working" behind the smokescreen of the persona. But Shakespeare's major advancement in drawing their characters is to have found a blend of what might normally be considered incompatible forms of behavior that not only co-exist in one temperament but in their restless commotion create the impression of a mystery that can be only partially explained through the text. Eliot is right: Hamlet *is* literature's Mona Lisa, and Hal is the preliminary study for it. But the instability in the "workmanship" is a function of Shakespeare's method rather than his bafflement. In fact, one might argue that bafflement is the experience being aimed for and it is achieved, as it is in the Mona Lisa, by the projection of behavioral signals that may be read in opposing ways. (Does the

[2] Patrick Cruttwell, "The Morality of Hamlet—'Sweet Prince' or 'Arrant Knave'?" in *Hamlet*, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 5 (London, 1963), pp. 110-128.

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mystery of the Gioconda smile arise from something trivial the painter has said to his model or from a profound well of understanding in the subject?) The net effect of our juxtaposition of these opposing signals, as they accumulate over theatrical or reading time, is the illusion of deepening character born of our attempt to join the images, to find the thing between them, or beneath them, that will bring them all on line.

This is not hard to do, as our history in the criticism of these plays will show. But the variety and disagreement in the criticism are a giveaway of the problem itself: the absence of a clear path through the text from one stage of the characterization to the next. It is not in the least a matter of an incoherence between, say, "I did love you once" and "I loved you not," or between Hal at the Boar's Head and Hal at the palace, but of the text making us reliant on inference rather than demonstration. There is no such problem with characters like Brutus or Antony or Richard II, all of whose speech and actions are precisely self-proclamatory. One has the feeling in Richard's public and private speeches that everything that is on the man's mind is being said. But with Hal and Hamlet Shakespeare was apparently dealing with a different kind of character crisis that required a new dramaturgic relationship between speech and behavior. At least I would agree with critics like Daniel Seltzer who feel that something brand new appears in Shakespeare's method in the *Henriad* plays.

In his perceptive essay on "Prince Hal and Tragic Style" Seltzer suggests that what actually dates from the *Henry IV* plays is "the felt existence of an inner life from which [character] motivation and action both spring."[3] Hal, he says, is "one of the most pivotal" characters in Shakespeare's career because it was here that he acquired the ability "to make a character change internally" (p. 14). Seltzer finds the cause of this phenomenon in the changes that take place in Hal's character scene by scene: all of those impurities and confusions that bother us, or some of us, about him. "Hal changes internally every time we see him" (p. 24). He develops, he is a "man in flux" (p. 22) and you can account for his behavior at each stage as a product of his "self-experience only as far as

[3] Daniel Seltzer, *Shakespeare Survey* 30 (1977), pp. 13-27.

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this part of his journey through the play can have carried it" (p. 23).

It is a convincing observation, but I have some difficulty with Seltzer's explanation of the source of this "life below the level of the text." Or at least I would put the emphasis on more formalistic grounds. The point to be made about character change, it seems to me, is not that it can be explained only by the immediate context in which it takes place but that you wouldn't know it *was* a change unless it was, to a perceivable degree, unexpected in the context. If it grows directly out of the scene in a cause-effect way, you would simply think, "Of course. X would react that way," in which case X wouldn't be changing but simply adapting. But Shakespeare's art in creating the sense of a subtextual life consists exactly in creating a gap between what we might expect and what we actually get. As I have said, it is not an unbridgeable gap but one that fixes our attention on a region of character that isn't being specified.[4]

Let us look at Seltzer's principal example, which also happens to be the best one. This is the infamous "I know you all" soliloquy of the first act of *1 Henry IV* which follows our first exposure to Falstaff like a bath of cold water. Here is surely the second most problematical moment in Hal's career, the foremost being the actual rejection scene which it anticipates. Many readers accept it without blinking as an astute political tactic for entering a fractured world haunted by the question of the legitimacy of the sitting king. It is, in other words, a "good Renaissance motive" that wouldn't have shocked Shakespeare's age. Some readers don't take it seriously but see it as a plot device whereby Shakespeare prepares us for the rejection scene and in the meantime assures us that all this "loose behavior" is well under control. Still others, however, see it as a troublesome instance of a hero whose motive is inferior, to say the least, to his moral substance as demonstrated elsewhere in the plays or as we conventionally like to have it in "good" heroes. Rejecting Falstaff is one thing, using him as food for political powder is another. Alvin Kernan

[4] I treat this idea, from a different perspective, in "The Horses of Macbeth," *Kenyon Review* (Spring 1985), pp. 52-66.

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finds "something grim about the phrase 'I know you all.' "[5] It is, I agree, brilliantly conceived in the economy with which it *distances* Hal—or a part of him—from any sincerity in his engagement at East Cheap. In fact, generically the speech belongs in the company of all those soliloquies in which the villain reveals his true motive after his victim has left the stage—one of the more notable examples being

> Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
> For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane
> If I would time expend with such a snipe
> But for my sport and profit.
>
> *Oth.* I, iii, 389ff.

At the very least the whole speech suggests that there is a side to the idleness that Hal finds beneath him, if not detestable ("base contagious clouds," etc.), and that he baits Falstaff to provoke his humour to even more unyok'd proportions, somewhat as one might taunt an animal. In short, he has not only used these people, he has, as Warwick innocently says in the next play, "studied" them while doing so. This is exactly the "grim" sense behind "I *know* you all," which carries here some of the Biblical connotations of forbidden or ill-gotten knowledge. In fact, given the felicitous range of meanings in *know*, one wonders what sort of grim/happy smile might have been on Shakespeare's face when, nine acts later in his most stunning *scène à faire* to date, he penned the line, "I know thee not, old man."

Seltzer finds the speech "to some extent manipulative, though hardly condescending or cruel" (p. 23). He forgives it because it can be understood as Hal's reaction to the scene immediately preceding, which was "not always a purely friendly one." "It is spoken, one might say, because of what has occurred during the scene, and in response to it." But I wonder if you can explain away the fact that many people stumble on this text by saying that they haven't read it in the

[5] Alvin Kernan, "*The Henriad:* Shakespeare's Major History Plays," *Modern Shakespearean Criticism: Essays on Style, Dramaturgy, and the Major Plays* (New York, 1970), p. 266. The essay was published in a shorter version in *The Yale Review*, Vol. LIX, No. 1 (Autumn, 1969).

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proper context. It comes down, rather, to the possibility of a flaw in "workmanship" or of the workman doing something else, or more than, he appears to be doing. Perhaps it might even be a little of both. It is possible that the political motive was the best Shakespeare could manage, that he needed something here—almost anything within reason—to account for the legendary wildness of the Prince of Wales, and that we are meant to take it as a necessary convenience, both for himself and for his character, that would allow the loose behavior to continue. In this sense it is the analogue of Hamlet's sudden scruples about the Ghost's honesty which provide Hamlet with a rationale for further delay—if you feel he *does* delay—and Shakespeare with the wonderful, but otherwise irrelevant, complication that begins with the arrival of the players and ends with Hamlet's exile to England. I am not suggesting that the political motive is irrelevant, simply that it gets your attention as something unattractively pragmatic and self-centered when sized against the life and "mirth" of the Falstaff scene. My own sense of the speech is that it is the nasty product of a flinty mind, but I wouldn't want to alter it any more than I would want to alter Hamlet's unfortunate behavior in the nunnery scene. Seltzer is right, finally: it does grow out of the immediate context; but I think it is less a change than a demonstration of the suddenness with which a temperament can shift its course. In the end you can neither endorse it as the complete motive nor reject it. On one hand, there is a visible political streak in Hal, just as there is a scrupulous streak in Hamlet; but on the other hand, his "addiction" to the means of his "redemption" belies the credibility of its political purpose, just as Hamlet's at-homeness in the world of thought and delay belies the sincerity of his scruples. Thus there is a kind of "double business" here, as Claudius (who also wants it both ways) would put it: as behavioral signals the two motives do not round each other out complementarily but rather pose two different centers of possibility between which we sense a gap, or a place where the text disappears, like a river going underground. And it is in this gap that we build most of our theories.

I have probably put too much emphasis on the soliloquy, but the point could just as easily be made by looking at the

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happy side of Hal's character. For example, the wooing of Kate scene finds him at his most "gracious." Here Hal's wit and charm are absolutely "glitt'ring." But who can forget that it is also a political scene in which an offer is "graciously" being made that cannot be refused? Even if you accept the scene as an obligatory happy ending, there is still a question as to how romantic and political goals can coincide so neatly in a single enterprise. No matter how you read the scene these two sides of the motive keep getting in each other's way. The sincerity confuses the political expediency (Is he *actually* falling in love?) and the expediency confuses the sincerity. There is great wit in Hal's little joke—

> but, in loving me, you should love the friend of France; for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it, I will have it all—

but under the wit is a glimmer—remote as it may be in this comic context—of the man who has just cut the throats of the French prisoners in his angry mood at Agincourt. This is the same man who "knew" Falstaff, and then, for quite expedient and kingly reasons, praised by all of England and no doubt blessed by the King of kings himself, he chose to know him not.

It is probably unnecessary to labor the point long with Hamlet, but as an illustration let me cite one instance of the technique. When Hamlet leaves the platform after his frenzied meeting with the Ghost and re-enters 290 lines later, I instantly sense a "change" in his deportment. He has charged out of the play only to stroll back into it "reading on a book." Of course time has passed, and a good actor could provide a smooth transition from one Hamlet to the other; moreover, one might claim that the context here is that of Hamlet playing the antic and biding his time for the right moment to "sweep" to his revenge. Still, I think the seed of Hamlet's mystery is located in the parenthesis of these two appearances. Somehow you know here, if you didn't know before, that Hamlet is constitutionally incapable of tending to the business end of revenge. It has chiefly to do with Shakespeare's decision to present him in this oblique-ironic posture, rather than showing him bustling, as Richard III would say.

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One can't argue that there are still three acts to go and that Shakespeare couldn't have him closing in this early because it is quite easy to write a long revenge play without arousing suspicions of delay. It is basically a matter of the kinds of things Shakespeare put in Hamlet's path. A prime example of his offering us indirections instead of directions is the fact that he here feeds Hamlet poor Polonius rather than Claudius. This is a very subtle tactic and it opens the way to a whole series of surrogate or mini-revenges Hamlet can take while avoiding the main one. Thus, depending on how you choose to interpret Hamlet's scruples, you can claim that he isn't delaying at all but working at fever pitch, though not on the right project. And what, in the way of depth psychology, haven't we been able to make out of the fact that Hamlet, either with sword or word play, seems always to be killing someone *other than* Claudius!

All in all, this technique is similar, in its effect, to Empson's seventh type ambiguity, or the ambiguity that occurs in a text when there are "two opposite meanings defined by the context."[6] In our case, it would not necessarily indicate a "fundamental division in the writer's mind" but that the writer wanted to put a division in his character's and in our own minds. This needn't have been a conscious strategy, of course, and it is quite probable that Shakespeare's audience would have felt no such division, since an actor (like a critic) can elect to take only one pathway through a complex text. But we moderns, we *textualists*, are caught in these divisions and there is no reason to believe that they are not part of the art and that contradictory meanings do not produce a satisfying "stasis of appreciation" that deepens character by slightly confusing it. It is, as Empson says, "at once an indecision and a structure" and what happens when the mind is suspended in such a structure is that it doesn't see a confusion as much as that something is causing a confusion. It works somewhat like a metaphor extended in time in that you are continually looking for the similarity in very different things.

I hope it doesn't seem that I am making Shakespeare into a sleight-of-hand artist in speaking of a confusion in character or in his creating the illusion of character depth. By illusion I

[6] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York, 1949), p. 192.

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refer simply to the proper business of art. We have, finally, only the texts of people, not people, and character is put together out of "bodies" of words that are somehow translated into moral and psychological impulses in our own bodies as we read. Depth of character is not profundity of thought or darkness of mind. It is something that is aroused less by qualities and traits than by the arrangement of the "parts." One of the reasons that psychological criticism flourishes on Shakespeare (as opposed, for instance, to Marlowe or Kyd) is that he managed to produce, when he wanted to, a dramatic equivalent of the unconscious mind, or that part of mental activity that we can know only by drawing inferences from visible behavioral signs. "Literary" critics tend to take this achievement for granted without thinking how difficult it is to create the impression of depth and complexity of character with the dramatist's limited toolbox. Given the human medium through which drama must pass and the immediacy of its presentation, most dramatic character is melodramatic or humouristic: all traits point in the same direction, like so many filings aligned by the magnetic field of a single vice or virtue. If a character is greedy, he will also be loveless—he will hate children and kick dogs—although love and greed are no more incompatible in the same individual than chastity and modesty are necessarily compatible.

But notice that when we cannot answer all the questions about a character by the alignment of given motives and traits, or when we all answer the questions differently, we are approximating the conditions under which we "read" character in daily life. In life, character (even our own) unfolds as a mystery. "We have to deal with human reality," Sartre writes, "as a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is."[7] In the very best of us, behind the stated or believed motive lurks the possibility of casuistry, of bad faith, of performing the charitable act for the uncharitable reason. My suggestion here is that Shakespeare found a compromise between art's demand for clarity and nature's production of seeming confusions and that he took his first noticeable step in this

[7] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology* (New York, 1966), p. 100.

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direction with the character of Prince Hal. Hal in turn, either by design or by instinct, served as the model for Hamlet who, by our common consent, remains the most complex and enigmatic character in drama. Certainly there must have been other factors. For instance, Hamlet might owe something to Hotspur or to other characters in other plays. There is even a smack of Hamlet in the character of Rosalind who is a sort of fox (among a series of foxy ladies to follow) in that she is, on one hand, passionately in love with Orlando but, on the other, quite above the "lunacy" of love. Still, I would argue that there is really no enigma here. What comes out of Rosalind's mouth in the way of cynicism and satire on love is licensed more by her double role as lover and as tutor to her beloved than by her psychological complexity. That is, it is one thing to say to the man you love, by way of testing the depth of his love, "Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love," but quite another to say this in a soliloquy or in a firm context inimical to the spirit of love.

We are talking, finally, about a habit of Shakespeare's mind, something that was present from the beginning to the last plays, and not a discovery he made one morning in the summer of 1597. One general hallmark of his method that bears on my discussion is something we might refer to as the minus/plus effect. Other writers are content to give you, say, an out-and-out villain (which Shakespeare also does, on occasion), but frequently you notice that he gives the villain a positive trait or a moment of virtue that mitigates the villainy or at least confuses a good clean melodramatic reading of the character. The villain might have pangs of conscience during a crime (the second murderer in *Richard III*) or after it (Claudius in *Hamlet*), or like the traitor Cawdor he might unexpectedly die well. On the other hand, Shakespeare will slightly stain the virtue of a good character by giving him or her a little trick of ego or a moment of weakness or ill-will (Romeo's childishness in Friar Laurence's cell, Macduff's questionable flight to England, Isabel's "cruel" virtue, Antony's cowardice in the suicide scene). One can say this is Shakespeare's comprehensiveness, as Dryden did, or his just representation of general nature, as Johnson did, but it is a structural trait of his method and it often expresses itself almost as something

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spliced into the character as a surprise, or an attempt to press the coherences of identity as far as possible.

In fact, this minus/plus effect can probably be counted as one aspect of Shakespeare's "negative capability," or his ability, as Keats says, to dwell calmly in "uncertainties, mysteries and doubts" without any irritable reaching after certainties. More than any of his other heroes, he endowed Hal and Hamlet (though in different degrees) with this same capability—or at least half of it. They have no trouble locating the uncertainties in their imposed situations, but unlike their maker they are anything but sanguine about taking them at face value. They are Shakespeare's self-starting agonists. Goethe writes, "With only the slightest shift in the balance of my character I believe there is no crime I could not commit." My feeling is that with Hal and Hamlet we have a kind of character balance that with the slightest shift might produce either a social genius or a solitary neurotic, or might indeed produce each successively in the same person. As with most delicate balances, the potential danger is that everything may suddenly slide all one way. And what for others in their world would be a swift and automatic response (e.g., a Fortinbras or a Laertes, a Prince John or a Hotspur) is for them a crisis of identity. It is not a matter of wanting to reject the role-to-be-assumed (kingship) or the act-to-be-done (revenge) but of bringing the immense resources of an extraordinary ego, a skeptical intelligence, and a fundamentally lonely self on line with the project. For such men, the readiness is everything and readiness is achieved through a process of gathering one's being into a perfect self-conformity whereby the summons from without can be converted into an act of choice from within.

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JOHN SIMON

Brothers Under the Skin: O'Neill and Williams

Tennessee Williams' friend Gore Vidal called the playwright "the Bird," and a rare bird, *rara avis*, he was. But like that other Avis, he seems to have been condemned, hard and harder as he may have tried, to being always rated second after Eugene O'Neill. "Our best playwright after O'Neill" is the way many, myself included, have tended to put it. For some reason, leading playwrights throughout history have often come, or been made to come, in tandem: Racine and Corneille, Lope de Vega and Calderón, Gozzi and Goldoni, Goethe and Schiller, Goldsmith and Sheridan, Shaw and Wilde, Chekhov and Gorky, and, depending on whether you're looking at the Elizabethan or the Jacobean Shakespeare, Shakespeare and Marlowe or Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.

I don't know why there was so frequently a pair of divine twins, Castor and Pollux, among playwrights, and why, as in that starry couple of Dioscuri, only one was truly immortal. Perhaps the reason is that there has to be, as in the Miss America contest, a close runner-up who can take over in case nude photographs of the winner come to light. Or it may be that we need either a real or an imaginary second-best so that we can deliver critical pronouncements on how and why A is better than B—or even, if we are particularly clever, on why B is actually as good as or (the height of revisionist bliss) superior to A.

Be this as it may, O'Neill and Williams are the two master dramatists of America, a phenomenon of which no one was more keenly, painfully aware than Williams himself. Here is a passage from Dotson Rader's highly unreliable memoir, *Tennessee: Cry of the Heart*:

> I noticed a program on the floor from some Eugene O'Neill

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Festival a year or two before. I showed it to [Tennessee]. He took it from me, smiled, and still holding it went back to sleep.

Five or six years before, when I had first stayed with him in Key West, he had found a long letter from Eugene O'Neill in a filing cabinet in his studio. Still in the original envelope, it was stained with wine and cigarette burns. But Tennessee read it to me, first explaining that he had received it after the opening of *The Glass Menagerie* in New York. O'Neill began his letter, the only one he ever wrote to Tennessee, with generous praise for *Menagerie* and its author. However, soon the body of the letter was darkened by O'Neill's warnings to the young playwright about the treachery of Broadway producers, the disloyalty of the audience, the egotism and callousness of reviewers, in short, the many difficulties of being a playwright in the United States, a country that seemed to have a compulsion to elevate its artists to great heights only to bring them roughly to ground. He warned him about the destructiveness that lay in wait ahead, booze and vicious women, wives who devoured the soul and spit it out (he didn't have to worry about Tennessee on that score), and he wrote at length about the terrible loneliness he felt, an isolation that Tennessee, too, would come to know, however great his gifts.

It was a very moving and a very sad letter, and I don't know what became of it. Years later, when Beverly Grunwald came to Key West to interview Tennessee for *Women's Wear Daily* . . . I asked him to read the O'Neill letter to her. He couldn't find it.

What I learned from the letter, and from Tennessee's ruminations on the literary genius and personal wreckage of Eugene O'Neill, was that he considered the author of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* to be his only competitor in the pantheon of American playwrights. He thought O'Neill was, after himself, the nation's greatest playwright, and he was right in that belief. Yet he was jealous of O'Neill all his life, indeed obsessed. While he never disparaged him, he firmly believed that there existed an ongoing conspiracy, directed by Leslie [this should be Arthur] Gelb and his wife, both employees of the New York *Times*, to destroy his reputation in order to ensure O'Neill's place as the first-ranking of America's dramatists. Whenever he received a bad review from the *Times*, something that occurred with heartbreaking regularity once Clive Barnes had left to become drama critic for the New York *Post*, Tennessee blamed the hated Gelbs.

"Baby, they have done it again!" The unkinder the notice, the more steamed he became at the Gelbs. "You know, they think they own a monopoly on Eugene O'Neill because they wrote the definitive biography of his life, the *authorized* biography. They have made a cottage industry out of him, and they are out to protect their financial stake, and that means destroying me! They are the Keepers of the Flame, and they fight to destroy anyone's reputation whose work might reduce the intensity of that light."

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For days after a bad review he muttered on ominously about the evil Gelbs using the power of the *Times* to ruin him. He may have been right.

Curiously, his admiration for the work of Eugene O'Neill never diminished, nor did his respect for the suffering of his sad life ever cease.

By 1980, when I last visited him in Key West, Tennessee's self-respect had grown so weak, his feelings of failure so unshakable, his desperation so acute that he sought even to impress me. . . .

This is how he did it. He went into his studio and got the playbill from the O'Neill Festival I had found three years before. On its cover was a large, handsome sepia photograph of the playwright taken shortly before his death. Tennessee excitedly showed it to me. On it was written, with a ballpoint pen, "To Tennessee, with love, Eugene O'Neill."

He asked me to take it to the art store and have it beautifully framed.

A few days later, when I brought the framed picture home, Tennessee made quite a ceremony of housing it prominently on display on the small wicker table by the sofa . . . in the living room. To make room for it he removed the framed photograph of Hart Crane, shoving it in a drawer.

Watching him, I felt I might cry, so unhappy was I made by his desperate act, this need for approval from the dead. I knew Tennessee had signed the picture himself, I knew his handwriting as well as my own. I knew the Festival, for which the playbill was printed, had taken place long after O'Neill had died. It saddened me to think that he thought he could fool anyone with it, and sadder still that he felt he had to try.

When I was last in his home in Key West, in July 1982, the O'Neill picture, with its framed inscription, was in the breakfront behind the dining table.

This passage prompted the following response from Gore Vidal in his review of Rader's and Donald Spoto's Williams biographies in *The New York Review of Books*:

Toward the end, [Williams] had personified the ringleaders [of the anti-Williams cabal]. They were a Mr. and Mrs. Gelb who worked for the *New York Times*. Because they had written a book about Eugene O'Neill, the Bird was convinced that the Gelbs were using the *Times* in order to destroy him so that they could sell more copies of their book about O'Neill who would then be America's *numero uno* dramatist. Among Crier's [i.e., Rader's] numerous errors and inventions is the Eugene O'Neill letter. . . . The letter was written not after *Menagerie* but *Streetcar*, and Tennessee never read it to Crier or to anyone else because neither Tennessee nor I, in Rome in 1948, could make head or tail of it.

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> O'Neill was suffering from Parkinson's disease; the handwriting was illegible. The Bird and I had a running gag over the years that would begin, "As Eugene O'Neill wrote you . . ." Except for O'Neill, the Bird's sharp eye saw no dangerous competition. . . .

The trouble is that I cannot entirely trust Vidal's testimony either. Moreover, I do not think that Dotson Rader, on the evidence of my slight acquaintance with him and his writings, has the imagination to invent that story of Williams' reading him the O'Neill letter. How, in any case, would he have hit upon the correct notion of the existence of such a letter and its importance to Williams? (His misdating it, by the way, is perfectly consistent with Rader's general sloppiness.) Now, since Williams and Vidal were, apparently, both given to making up fictitious outpourings from O'Neill to Tennessee, isn't it plausible—indeed likely—that Williams produced the illegible letter and treated the gullible Rader to a bogus reading of it, rather like that false inscription on the photograph, whose existence not even Vidal challenges in his review? Certainly the supposed content of the letter fits both what O'Neill might have written and what Williams would have wanted him to say. And Williams clearly had the inventiveness and wit to improvise such a reading.

What emerges, then, is a love-hate, an admiration-rivalry Williams must have felt for O'Neill. Donald Spoto quotes Howard Barnes's review of *Streetcar* in the *New York Herald Tribune*, which contains the statement, "Williams is certainly the O'Neill of the present period." There is also a letter printed in *Represented by Audrey Wood*, in which that invaluable agent and friend is trying to raise the spirits of a Williams in a state of depression after the failure of *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, and writes, in January 1954: "You are an acknowledged artist whose accomplishments in the theatre are not matched by any other American dramatist, with the possible exception of O'Neill—and with all his greatness, he lacked your magic with theatre dialogue."

In the revised edition of their *O'Neill*, the hated and evil Gelbs include the following: "Late in 1946 O'Neill answered a letter from Tennessee Williams, who had written him in praise of *The Iceman*. He said Williams' note had been particularly welcome because it came at a time when he was 'down in

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the dumps.' ('O'Neill,' Williams said, years later, in recalling the alleged exchange of fan mail, 'gave birth to the American theatre and died for it.')" The difficulty is that, as Louis Sheaffer, the most reliable and authoritative O'Neill biographer, has shown, the Gelbs, whether evil or not, are pretty unreliable, and this exchange of letters is not mentioned in Sheaffer's definitive O'Neill biography. Significantly, the Gelbs give no source for their information.

What all this is meant to suggest is simply that there existed a Williams-O'Neill nexus, if not in any documented epistolary exchange, then, at any rate—and with equal consequence—in Williams' mind, as there is one in any serious consideration of American drama. I think we can trust Albert Bermel, who, in the July/August 1984 issue of *American Theatre*, quotes Jose Quintero, whom we can also trust: "Tennessee Williams said the impact of O'Neill on him was enormous. He could write like Williams because he had a predecessor who wrote like O'Neill." This remark points us in the direction of perceiving important similarities between the two playwrights rather than, as has been customary, significant differences—though these, too, of course, exist.

Even on the most superficial level, parallels between the playwrights can be traced. Both had difficult early family situations: forbidding, ungenerous fathers and adored but impossible mothers toward whom they felt as much guilt as they felt animus toward the fathers. O'Neill had a beloved brother who became an alcoholic; Williams, a sister who was to become confined to mental institutions. In other words, both experienced what Thomas Mann has called disorder and early sorrow, which, however oppressive to the person, may prove incitements to the artist. O'Neill had serious problems with his health just as Williams *thought* he had; if Tennessee's were mostly imaginary, they felt no less real for that. Both men had strong sexual drives, and the troubles O'Neill had with women, Williams had with men.

Far more important, though, than such biographical similarities are the parallels between the two men as artists. Both of them were prolific writers, even if Williams wrote fiction and poetry as well, whereas O'Neill stuck to plays. Yet for all their large outputs, each man is remembered mostly for two plays that tower above the rest of his productions: *The Iceman*

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Cometh and *Long Day's Journey Into Night* for O'Neill, *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* for Williams. Here, however, there is a difference: Williams' best work was written early, followed by a gradual but steady decline; O'Neill's in his last years, when he kept getting better, the two masterpieces flanked by a brace of other meritorious plays, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* and *A Touch of the Poet.* Dying at the relatively early age of 65, O'Neill might have gone on to other successes; for Williams, dead at 70, with a string of critical and audience failures stretching behind him, no such claim can be made.

Yet however much this may incline us in favor of O'Neill, what finally counts is the oeuvre, and *Summer and Smoke* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* can hold their own against *Moon* and *Poet.* So isn't it time to start examining how similar in intention and effect the best plays of O'Neill and Williams are instead of playing their authors off against each other? That there was a direct influence we know for the fact, among others, that Williams saw O'Neill's *Diff'rent* at the Provincetown Playhouse in the summer of 1940; and we cannot doubt what many, including the evil Gelbs, pointed out—that Emma Crosby in O'Neill's play was the forerunner of Blanche DuBois and Alma Winemiller.

What I want to consider in greater detail is the kinship between the two pairs of masterworks, a kinship not based on any traceable influence but on a meeting of minds. The first marked resemblance between our two playwrights is that neither of them gave a hoot about politics. It is true that American literature, dramatic or otherwise, is much less concerned with politics than is any of its European counterparts, yet it is also true that there have been a good many exceptions. From O'Neill's and Williams' drama, however, you would barely have gleaned that there were such things as two world wars and a rather uneasy time between them. Certainly, World War I creeps into *Strange Interlude*, but it is rather less real than the Boer War in *The Iceman Cometh*, where, however, there is some small discussion of the radical left. In Williams, there are Nazis at the periphery of *The Night of the Iguana* and a vague sense of a police state in *Camino Real*, but none of this gives either playwright a remote claim to being political.

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It is, conversely, common knowledge that O'Neill was concerned with social conditions, whereas Williams was not, and this is supposed to give the older playwright an edge over the more recent one. True, O'Neill's lesser plays are intensely social, yet how true is this of the masterpieces? *Journey* is first and last family drama, and even those derelicts in Harry Hope's saloon are treated not as victims of society but as people haunted by private demons that can be exorcised only by alcohol and self-delusion. Similarly, *Menagerie* is a family comedy-drama, and *Streetcar* a play in which social conditions are noted—the dying of the Old South, the rise of a crasser but sturdier new one—yet the principal concerns are personal rather than societal.

Still, *Iceman* and *Streetcar* are related to each other as crypto-social plays: both are characterized by their love for the outcast. In *Iceman*, this is obvious enough, though it should be stressed that love is extended not only to the various boozers, but also to the whores and their pimps. In *Streetcar*, the author's sympathy for Blanche is weakest, indeed nil, when her lack of understanding and compassion drives her young homosexual husband to suicide. Conversely, the greatest amount of authorial feeling for Blanche is expanded when she becomes most pariah-like: during her years of desperate sexual indulgence in Laurel as Belle Reve was crumbling, and at the end, as Blanche's own sanity crumbles into madness.

Blanche, moreover, incurs a not dissimilar demerit through her treatment of Stanley. Being a cultured, upper-class representative of the Old South, she patronizes the lower-class Kowalski, treating him not only as an inferior, but even as a primitive beast. There is a sexual element in this, to which I shall return, but there is also sheer condescension. Coming from an undistinguished middle-class family, Tennessee Williams suffered from the contumely of genteel, snobbish Southerners in his childhood and youth; no doubt some retributive animus informs his attitude toward Blanche. I recall my amazement when, as a graduate student at Harvard, I briefly made his acquaintance at the time of *Streetcar*'s Boston tryout, and found him much more sympathetic to Stanley than to Blanche.

I now have no doubt that, however much Tennessee identi-

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fied himself with Blanche, however much he *was* Blanche in certain ways—rather like the Flaubert who uttered his famous "Madame Bovary, c'est moi,"—he also felt a measure of self-hatred that he took out on Blanche, putting her through the wringer in more ways than one. Furthermore, he must have felt a strong sympathy tinged with sexual attraction for the kind of brash, acquisitive, unhypocritical, dominant young man Stanley represents, and Blanche's provocative taunts, echoing her cruel incomprehension of her young husband, must be reckoned as, at least in part, triggering her undoing. So we cannot dismiss *Streetcar* as having no latent social content, even if it may have remained hidden from its very author. But isn't it the nature of great works of art to have a life of their own, beneath and beyond even their makers' awareness? I might go a step further and assert that any work of art that is no more than exactly what its author, consciously and deliberately, put into it may be craftsmanlike and effective, may even be of importance, but will not, cannot be great.

To return to our parallelism, however, consider the supreme theme of illusions, so essential to all four of the plays we are discussing. It is, of course, central to *Iceman*, where every character lives in his illusions or, with greater accuracy, delusions about himself and the world, including Hickey, the one fellow who claims to have rid himself of crippling pipe dreams, and proposes to do as much for the rest of the dramatis personae. O'Neill clearly inherited the theme from the Ibsen of *The Wild Duck*, but it is also a theme that, in one form or another, has been with us since the year one, or, more accurately, since some 430-odd years earlier, when Sophocles wrote his *Oedipus Rex*, another play about a wiseacre who wants to put an end to illusions or delusions, and succeeds only in putting an end to his happiness, however specious.

Illusions, though less obviously, are equally important in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. James Tyrone cannot get over his early dire poverty, and lives, despite his prosperity, convinced that he must pinch pennies the way others might pitch them. It has become an obsession with him that cost his wife's health and caused her morphine addiction, threatens the health and very survival of his younger son, Edmund, and

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earns him the fierce resentment of both Edmund and his elder brother, Jamie. Jamie, likewise short-changed by his father, is well on his way to becoming a wastrel, but he, too, has illusions about his life to come. As for Mary, the wife and mother and drug fiend, her illusions are at least sweet and benevolent—a happy family living in affection and harmony—but are all the more pitiful for that. Only the autobiographical Edmund, thanks to his dedication to art and the clarity of perception his vocation exacts, is able to cut through this web of lies, but at what cost to himself the life of Eugene O'Neill sadly attests to.

It follows that O'Neill was of two minds about illusion. He perceived it as distinctly necessary to making life tolerable in *Iceman*; in *Journey*, on the other hand, he castigates it as the poisoner of the will to achieve, strangler of generous impulses—an opiate that, unlike the one in *Iceman*, does not console the desperate but paralyzes the potentially gifted. Perhaps those who have nothing to lose need illusions, whereas those who have something more to rely on cannot afford them; perhaps what O'Neill is saying is that the pipe dream is a slower, gentler form of suicide than facing reality with inadequate equipment.

Illusion is a principal theme in Williams, too, but his attitude toward it is even more complicated. In *Menagerie*, Amanda lives amid all manner of delusions about the past and the future, while trying to be practical about the present as she moves heaven and earth to make a success of Laura. But practicality about the otherworldly Laura, unfit for life, is misplaced, delusory. Amanda's maneuverings are about as helpful as her making Laura wish for happiness on the new moon. Yet Williams clearly sympathizes with Amanda's absurdity even as he does with Tom's common sense and Laura's resignation, and much more than with Jim's prosaism. Nevertheless, Amanda is also ridiculous and a menace—a monster of misplaced energy.

If we look now at *Streetcar*, the problem gets knottier. Blanche, like Amanda, is a creature mired in illusion, but also a practical schemer who sets about entrapping Mitch. Concerning the past, she has illusions for others, for show; for herself, she sees its horror clearly. About the future, she does

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have illusions: she thinks she can be happy with Mitch, something highly unlikely given their enormous differences. She even tries to coax Stella, a commonplace young woman, out of an ambience that suits her for the sake of some delusory better life away from Stanley, and reality finally catches up with her and, apparently, crushes her. The madhouse she is taken to may be a place in which she can forever indulge her delusions—her version of Harry Hope's saloon; or it may be calamitous, depending on whether it is informed by the mercilessness of the matron or by the humanity of the doctor.

Is facing the facts, tearing the veil of illusion, any better? When Stanley verbally, and Mitch physically, rend the paricolored lanterns from the light bulbs (surely an allusion to the colored lights Stanley and Stella see when they make love), is anyone better served by the revelations? That paper lantern takes us back to the song Blanche was singing in the hot tub, "It's only a paper moon / . . . But it wouldn't be make-believe / If you believed in me!" Belief can make Blanche young and innocent and loved again—or can it? Herein lies the tragedy of *Streetcar*: no one is quite right, no one is quite wrong. Illusions are simultaneously a deception, and thus bad, and a balm, and thus good. The ambivalence about illusion that O'Neill expressed consecutively from one play to another, Williams packs into one and the same play. It is not even a case of shifting, as in *Iceman*, away from illusions, as Hickey's arguments prevail; then back again to them, as Hickey's reasoning proves to have been of no help even to himself. No, it is the deepest kind of ambivalence or ambiguity that inheres in every step of the play, at every stop of the streetcar on its way to desire and death.

If, then, O'Neill and Williams are not entirely unrelated in matters of social consciousness—if, moreover, they are akin in their perceptions of the role of illusion in life—they become positively brothers under the skin on the subject of love-hate, in which all four plays are saturated. In both of the family plays, *Journey* and *Menagerie*, the atmosphere is fraught with anger at one's next-of-kin that sometimes is cloaked in loving concern, but presently strips for naked warfare. Only that isn't the end of it, either; under the phony love and real bitterness is yet another layer of genuine love, festering, impotent, neither to be shaken off nor to be sustained with impu-

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nity. In *Long Day's Journey* people are constantly apologizing for their outbursts; I have always wanted to count the number of apologies, but my mathematics isn't good enough.

What in O'Neill is done, as it were, sequentially—insult, apology, insult, remorse—gets fused in Williams. It is evident that Amanda is driving both her children away, but whereas Tom can eventually escape outward into the world, sister Laura can escape only into her unreal inner world. In the play, that is a world of fragile glass bric-a-brac, and equally frail, flickering candlelight; in real life, for sister Rose, it was insanity. But if we read the play carefully, we see that Tom and Laura's attitude toward their domineering mother is one of bristling meekness, of subservience frantically seeking a way out. At the same time, we perceive that Amanda-Edwina is also disguising her profound disappointment with her ineffectual children who are foiling her social aspirations just as distressingly as her husband foiled them. Her excess of smothering effusiveness must be a mask for resentment. So I think it is very cavalier to dismiss plays such as *Menagerie* and *Journey* as merely "personal" or autobiographical or solipsistic; in their intensely honest criticism (which includes self-criticism), they rise to being social documents as well.

The love-hate motif, however, looms just as large in the two more overtly social plays. In *Iceman*, there are, offstage, the relationships between Parritt and his mother, the mother and Larry, and Hickey and his wife, Evelyn; onstage, we have the relationships between the bartenders, Rocky and Chuck, and their girls, as well as the one between the Boer and the Briton. Not to be ignored either is the curious triangle involving Harry Hope, his dead wife, and her brother, Ed Mosher; or the frustrated surrogate-father and son relation between Larry and Parritt. Everywhere one looks there is smoldering love-hate, now drowned in booze, now coming hissingly alive again. And so it is in *Streetcar*, between Stanley and Blanche, Blanche and Stella, at times Stella and Stanley, and eventually Blanche and Mitch, not to mention the comic upstairs version of Steve and Eunice.

In trying to sketch in a few significant similarities or equivalences between the works of Williams and O'Neill, it was not my intention either to reverse the usual order at the finish line or to confirm it. I do, however, wish to begin here

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what others, better qualified, should continue: turning the two dramatists not into opposites, each serving to point up the lacks of the other, but into forces complementing, corroborating, reinvigorating each other. Pressed, I would still have to assert that because O'Neill had the greater range and variety, and perhaps a nobler zeal to discover the new through experimentation, he deserves to win in a photo finish. Yet *Camino Real*, *Slapstick Tragedy*, and *The Two-Character Play* are, in their way, experimental too, and if unsuccessful, just how successful is, say, *The Great God Brown*? Drama, in any case, is not horseracing; if anything it is more like catskinning, for which there exists more than one way.

But there is only one way to end this discussion: by calling attention to the major advantage Williams had over O'Neill, the one Audrey Wood reminded Tennessee of in the letter quoted earlier, and known to every thoughtful critic. I mean, of course, language. For the one thing O'Neill never quite managed was that sublimated poetry that makes a playwright's prose sing out at the right moments; it is the thing such supposedly major playwrights as Arthur Miller and Lillian Hellman could never shout their way into hailing distance of, a thing that Thornton Wilder, Lanford Wilson, and a few others share with Williams to varying degrees.

What exactly is this theatrical prose poetry? I can't tell you what it is *exactly* any more than I can define poetry *tout court*. It can, however, be analyzed—in terms of rhythm, cadence, sonority, imagery, etc.—either in sustained passages or in brief spurts such as the one I shall examine here. At the end of Scene VI of *Streetcar*, Mitch and Blanche have found each other; he has timidly kissed her and declared himself. "Her breath," says the stage direction, "is drawn and released in long, grateful sobs," and then she exclaims: "Sometimes—there's God—so quickly!" Why do these five or six words in seven syllables work so potently?

First, there is the extreme concision: not "heaven" or "there is," but "God" and "there's"—one syllable apiece. Second, the scansion, stressed by the dashes representing sobs or pauses but also emphasizing the three metrical feet: a trochee, an iamb, an amphibrach. The English language, and with it English poetry, is predominantly iambic; but not even in verse, let alone in prose, could one string together unalloyed iambs and

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expect anything but doggerel. So Williams—who, let us not forget, was also a poet and author of at least one extraordinary poem, "Life Story"—uses a line of iambic trimeter, but varies it cannily. At the beginning, he introduces a traditional deviation, the reversal of an iamb into a trochee; at the end, by another traditional variation, an extra syllable is added to create a feminine ending, a dying fall. A lesser writer might have concluded with a perfect iamb, "Sometimes there's God so fast," and merely confirmed his mediocrity. The way that accented-unaccented "quickly" gently dissolves into silence exactly reproduces Blanche's emotional state.

Third, sonority. The line affects us so deeply also because of the way the two dark-voweled syllables, "God" and "so," are followed by two high-pitched, airy ones: "quickly." After the slow, long, opaque sounds of those two o's—the second more closed and prolonged than the first—the brisk brightness of "quickly" takes off, flies heavenward. Finally, the imagery. A lesser playwright might have written, instead of "quickly," "soon." But that would have conveyed only shortness of time. "Quickly," however, suggests also an agent, someone doing something with speed, and so God becomes personalized. Furthermore, "Heaven" or "Paradise," though longer words, are less inclusive; "God" is absolute in its very monosyllabicity, and all-encompassing. It is also fresher than "Heaven" or "Paradise" or "bliss," all tired unto death; and God is not only bigger, he is also more intimate: the one who looks after us, as Blanche needs to be looked after.

Since O'Neill's letter to Williams, if it ever certifiably existed, has certainly disappeared, we shall never know for sure how O'Neill regarded his younger colleague. But letter or no letter, O'Neill was a great help to Williams. Just as the blocked Ibsen, when all else failed, looked up at the portrait of Strindberg conspicuously hung above his desk, and proceeded—out of envy, ambition, or spite—to write like a demon, so Williams must have had O'Neill's picture before him to prod him on. Whether an actual picture, as Dotson Rader claims, or a mental image, hardly matters. Icon or eidolon, it urged him on, and Williams responded by pouring out some of the most sumptuous and moving images ever bestowed on the stage.

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GARY KRIST

Ty and Janet

Animals

No animals, period. She was really strict on this. What about cats? I ask her. No, she says, cats are dirty. Dirty. I say, what do you think they're doing with the tongues all over, tasting themselves? That's saliva, she says, saliva's got germs, especially cat saliva. So, OK, no cats. Gerbils—she won't even talk. So finally, she agrees on fish, tropical fish. Fine. I read up a little, get a few books from the library, go to the pet store. The guy there—he's got this yellowy glass eye, I remember this about him, and this smell kind of like stale tobacco—the guy sells me a twenty-gallon and says, whattaya want, some nice guppies? I say, no, you're gonna go, you go right. So he shows me these little jobs, really nice colors, zinging around, and he says, these are neons. Fine, I say, let's have some neons. He shows me other things, too—angels, mollies (they're only black, he says, but they're cheap and they give the tank a classical look). In short, he gives me what he calls "a starter outfit"—filter, tank, fish, food, everything—ninety-seven thirty-five with the tax. I say to him, Jesus, this outfit runs for I bet half that in the city, Canal Street they sell this kind of stuff. He says, so go to Canal Street.

This is a Saturday, Janet's out bowling with her girlfriends, so I figure she'll be real surprised to come in and see this thing I got set up—angels sailing across the tank, neons zinging around. It's the angels I love, though. Jesus, the way they sail across that tank? Slow, like little skinny kings.

Anyway, Janet comes home twelve-thirty, one o'clock. I'm sound asleep in the chair in front of the tank. First thing she says, she shakes me awake, middle of the night, and she says, I quote, "What's this business we got now?" I say, you agreed on fish. She says, goldfish is one thing, I didn't expect Mar-

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ineWorld. I say, just look at those angels if you want to know why I went whole hog.

So, she can live with the aquarium is the upshot. I do feeding, the cleaning the filter, everything, she takes a look in the tank once in a while. Anyway, pretty soon I start to spend some time with the fish. I get into this thing: I wake up two, three in the morning and put on a dimmer lamp in the living room and watch them sleep. Sleep is I guess what you call it. They get all quiet and motionless at night, down near the little plastic sandcastle with the bubbles coming out of the moat. And they just stay there, moving a little fin now and then, and I watch them. One night even Janet comes out into the living room. Insomnia, she says. I say, come over here and take a look at this. She sighs, but she comes over. I make room for her on the kitchen chair I brought in, and we sit there watching the fish. Dim orange light, the bubbles making a quiet sound, her smell like the rye bread from her work. Then she puts a hand on my shoulder and says, "What are they, Ty, resting?" Resting, she says. I like that. So I say, yeah, they're resting. So we sit there, she's in her nightgown, hair out to here, and we watch the fish rest.

Shit, God knows what happens sometimes, though. You come home from the plant, you don't know what all you'll find—fish corpses, shredded tailfins bouncing up and down on the jet stream. I come home one day I see this angel—my favorite angel—lying on the ground about five feet from the tank in a little puddle of water, dead. I say, "What've we got, suicide now?" This angel jumped out of the damn tank, just like that, boom, it's dead, no chance in hell of bringing that thing back to life. Dried up like an old wallet. And it's, like: What did *I* do? Cheap food? Not enough "greenery" in the tank or what?

It's like when DePaula up and quits on me on a Wednesday afternoon. What's the reason? Bad vibes, he says. What, vibes, it's the buzz of the flywheels you're feeling, for chrissake. He says the other guys feel it too, you ask them. Like shit, though. Three days later I see DePaula behind the five-dollar win-place-show at the Meadowlands, pulling down probably two times the money, from what you hear. A crock, I tell you. Win, place, fucking *show*, for godsake.

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I go to the zoo a lot—I'm kind of this animal lover?—and I was at the zoo this once, looking at the penguins behind the glass there. They're all bunched up at the door at the back of the habitat, they call it, jerking their heads—vip, vip—and I figure the guy who feeds them is out there. Sure enough, the door opens, and this young guy in a lumber jacket with a beard and galoshes walks in with this sky-blue bucket full of fish. So he's taking the fish out one at a time and sticks it down the gullet of one of the penguins. He does this for a few minutes, and pretty soon, with all the penguins and them all looking more or less alike, the guy I guess loses track of who's had his fish and who hasn't. So what he does is start just holding out the fish and moving it from one beak to another until finally one of the penguins opens his beak and swallows it. This goes on, he sticks a fish in front of one, it turns away, he moves it to the next, this one just stares at it, dumb; same thing down the line until he gets to one that grabs it, tosses his head back, and, slurp, down it goes. After this, the guy comes out and I go up to him. He smells like antiseptic and fish, this guy. So: What's this routine you got with these birds, I ask him. And he tells me: He loses track of who's had the fish and who hasn't (this like I'd figured out already), so what he does, he gives each bird a chance at the next fish. Any penguin's got a fish in his gullet will have to think a minute before swallowing another; any penguin with no fish yet'll snap the thing up pronto. So they tell you, he says, the penguins tell you if they've got their fish. Well, I think about this for a few minutes and then it hits me: It's beautiful, this guy and his penguins. It strikes me, I can't even say. I leave the zoo, drive through the Bronx, I don't even want to see anything else.

Janet thinks I'm crazy on this. One night, we're sitting in front of the TV, she's got this box of animal crackers on her lap—the homemade kind they make at her place?—and I watch her take a cookie out of the box, put it in her mouth, take another, do the same thing—all the while she's got her eyes glued on the TV. Finally, I gotta say something. "Baby, you don't know if you're eating a gorilla, an elephant, or what, you eat those things that way." She looks at me like I'm cracked or something. Then she says it. She sticks this jaguar

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or panther cracker in her mouth and says (I could have cried when she said it), she says, mouth full: "What difference does it make? They all taste the same anyway."

Bread

I don't do much baking anymore, not like the old days when everybody would line up with a loaf's worth and beat the daylights out of it, little clouds of flour rising and everybody joking: "No loafers here!" and "We've got enough flour here for the Rose Bowl Parade!"; to which my famous comment that once: "At yeast!" Nowadays I do mostly paperwork—payroll, supply ordering. The bakers don't usually like you to lend a hand (union rules, they say), unless of course they're in a crunch. But every so often I'll want to make a loaf myself and they say fine and shove it in with theirs.

When I started I was part time—still in school—worked from seven to eight-thirty and three to six. We were much smaller then. One baker—Angel, a Cuban, used to take the bus up from Union City at 4 a.m. every day. I used to imagine him alone on that dark bus, passing empty sidewalks and stores, his hands working at that grip-spring that was supposed to build up his forearms. You always knew where Angel was—he creaked.

Ty would show up every day after detention—around four, when everyone in charge was gone—and I'd feed him doughnuts, one after the other—crullers, rolls, muffins. Who knows where he put it all. He joked once that he did the old finger down the throat routine after he left, which was disgusting (but funny, because I never believed him). He ate a dozen glazed bowties once and looked yellow afterwards. I had to smile at him though, with his cowlick and that queasy look and that empty doughnut tray in front of him. I kissed the white glaze off his upper lip and gave him a half-dozen crullers to take home. You could get away with that back then; nowadays I'd be the one to notice the cash discrepancy and lecture everybody about not forgetting to write down their take-homes.

Ty used to pick me up afterwards in his mother's electric

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blue Toyota. He'd call me "Bread Pudding" and ask me to smuggle out some of our homemade animal crackers for him. He was a year out, working an evening shift at PSE&G, and I was still a junior when he finally asked me. Hell, I was still doing things like running for class treasurer ("Lesser is More" was my campaign slogan). Of course I said yes, Sybil and my mother be damned.

We got married up in Bear Mountain in the middle of January. Eloped really, though we did end up convincing at least our mothers to drive up together in Mom's Omni for the ceremony. Neither of them cried. Mom called Dad right after and yelled at him for not coming, even if he did think I was too young. Then she and Mrs. Steinbock gave us a few packages wrapped in aluminum foil and got in the car. They never made it home, though; not in the Omni, at least. They stalled on 9W and couldn't turn the engine over. Ty had to go down and try to jump start them. I sat in bed in my new red satin nightgown, doing crosswords and laddergrams until Ty came back at 4 a.m.

Of course I quit school and started full time at the bakery. A working couple. I'd bring home bags of rolls and bread and sometimes that's all we'd eat—bread and wine. We'd laugh, and Ty would turn on a lamp and say, "I made this electricity today; you like it?" and I'd start throwing pumpernickel rolls at him. The first month we did dishes three times. The garbage would go out only when the piles of paper plates and pizza boxes started to tip over.

The whole thing (the marriage, I mean) never crashed, really. It just tinkled, gradually, like icicles falling off the eaves when the weather warms up. I kept waiting for things to happen that never did. Other things happened. I'd get depressed all of a sudden, and Ty would get mad at me because I couldn't tell him why. Then he'd get depressed too. He hated his job, especially after the promotion. Some of the older guys who were his buddies wouldn't even speak to him after. God, that burned him. Once, about a year and a half after we got married, he came home and drank too much and started pushing me around, yelling at me. He's not that big a man, though; I shoved him back over his mother's hand-embroidered ottoman and he hit his head and was out, literally out,

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for about two minutes. That humbled him. Next day he said he wanted to have a talk about getting some pets.

So what happened to us? I don't know, it was like putting two chemicals together and waiting for a reaction that never comes. Both chemicals just turn blue (Ha!). Sybil was right about Ty, what can I say? Looking back on it, I wonder how I ever said yes. And why it took me four years to realize my mistake. I think I have this problem: I stay in situations too long. Things may be bad, I always figure, but they could be a lot worse. When things start to press on me, I can always make myself a hot cup of soup, sit in my armchair, and do the jumble in the paper. Then I can start fresh. I can tell myself that I have what I want.

Except for the drinking, I could have made it with Ty. And it really was rare that he got mean drunk; he really is kind of a gentle man—a sad, gentle man. I'd come home and find my crossword books behind his armchair. He'd been at them, filling in all the blanks in the ones I'd started. Nonsense words like "plark" and "whisbox."

And there were other effects. I mean, it shouldn't matter, I guess. But it did. And I just kept trying. I came home one night in one of my Let's-see-if-we-can't-revive-this-thing-again moods, and three minutes after I'm in the door I already see that it's a lost cause, that *he* is a lost cause. So I told him I had to go, did he understand why? He didn't, and so I left, really left—suitcase, checkbook, and all. I left him sitting on the toilet with a glass of dessert wine in his mitt. My Tyrone.

It wasn't until I was on the second set of stairs that the softball rose in my throat and almost made me turn around. . . .

Wine

I thought the guy was putting us on. But, I mean: the Tarrytown Country Club; we all paid through the nose. But "foxy," Jesus! There was even a couple of laughs when he said it. But then the next guy looks up and says "Mahogany, violets, plums." I'm sitting there thinking, Oh Christ, but the guys, they're saying "No, all that's in there if you taste, taste actively with the nose as well as the tongue." So I try. I take a

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sip, thinking Violet, Plums (I don't even begin to know what the mahogany business is), but anyway, damned if I don't taste like a plummy taste? The violets, maybe the smell is kind of flowery, but I really can taste the plums. Other people, same thing. The lady next to me raises her hand and says "Mint, too, right?" And the two guys look at each other and one says, "Well, eucalyptus anyway."

So this is how it started. Tuesday nights Janet's out with Sybil, so why not? My grandfather used to love the stuff. Lots of people dropped out (including the mint lady, I might add), but me, I stay two full rounds of classes, we do everything, Rhone wine, Alsace-Lorraine, everything. At the end we have this big tasting party and by midnight people are yelling out things like "Dead cat!" and "Pepto-Bismol!" and even the instructors laugh, they're crocked just like the rest of us.

The guys at the plant, they're always on to me about this, you know, kidding me about that Leatherette case I'd bring to work when I had a tasting that night, with the holes cut out in the Styrofoam for the bottle and glasses? We have this kind of jokey relationship I like to maintain in my area. Last Christmas they gave me this nice bottle of Beaujolais and a corkscrew made out of a piece of driftwood from Point Pleasant. It's part of our thing, the guys and me—the wine thing. It's, like, I'm their supervisor, but they can kid me on the wine thing. I find this appropriate, I think.

Anyway, with the course, I start to buy on my own. First I stick to the cheaper stuff—five, six bucks—but pretty soon I figure what the hell, I'll spring for ten, twenty. It gives me pleasure, and we're doing OK, Janet's working, I'm working, the apartment's rent control, so I buy the good stuff. Champagne I buy; some good Burgundies. I start to go into Sauternes. Now this is an interesting wine, Sauternes—very sweet, a dessert wine, as it were. What they do, they let the grapes stay on the vine way late, this is only in a special area of Bordeaux France now, they let the grapes stay way late until this mold crops up, I kid you not. "Noble rot" is what they call this mold thing, and it starts shriveling up the grapes and concentrating the sugars, and then they pick the things one by one, and the wine is sweet, but not Mogen-David sweet:

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complex sweet. There's acid, too, in the grapes, and the acid and the sugar balance out and it's incredible. An arm and a leg the stuff costs, I never told Janet what I paid she'd raise one holy ruckus that's for sure. One trouble is you've got to drink the whole bottle in one day or else the whole thing spoils on you and, bam, there's your twenty bucks down the drain literally, and I mean literally.

All right, so maybe it gets to be a regular thing, like. But the stuff tastes so good you don't want to stop at half the bottle even if you want to. Half-bottles they charge you highway robbery. "We've got *this* on top of everything now!" This from you-know-who. "On top of everything," like what's everything, you know? She doesn't do too bad herself with the Gilbey's either. You're just a cheaper drunk than me, that's all the difference, blah, blah, blah, before you know it she's out the door again spending the night at Sybil's.

That time she left—she left for a month once—it was kind of like that. She comes home, I don't know, hot to trot like she must've seen some hot new pastry boy at work, and I'm already halfway through a Chateau Coutet 1979, so who's in the mood, y'know? This she finds unacceptable. "There exists no way to get through to you," she says, putting on the Sybil voice, and pretty soon I hear her in the bedroom getting the big green suitcase out of the storage space over the closet. I decide to play it close, the thing'll blow over, maybe if I drink some water and think sexy thoughts I can take her from behind while she's stuffing leg warmers into the suitcase. But: No way. I'm in the bathroom when she's ready to leave, she stands in the doorway looking at me on the throne with a suitcase and a loaf of three-grain bread in her arms. I look up at her—ugly fluorescent lighting—and "You're not leaving," I tell her. Bam, she's out the door without a word.

She was gone for one month. At Sybil's, she said, but I don't know, Sybil'd never let me talk to her. *She* had to call me, this was the deal. I'd come home, I'd see evidence—another drawer emptied out, the blender gone, once she even fed the fish and left a note: "Have you taken a look at that algae buildup?"—as if she cared. The weird thing is, though, once she's gone, I stop drinking, cold turkey. The bottles just sit there on the rack—fifteen-, twenty-dollar bottles, they've

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got no temptation for me anymore. All the while, I know she's coming back, so I'm just sort of waiting. I sit up with the fish, I read the newspaper. And she does come back, one month later to the day. She gives me a call: "Things work out; things don't work out. Put a fire on in the fireplace." So I do, I put on one of those supermarket log jobbies and, can you believe it, I break open this special bottle of Perrier-Jouet champagne, with the painted flowers hand-painted on the bottle, 1978? It's like, it just doesn't occur to me that this might be a problem, I'm so out of the habit. Anyway, she shows up fifteen minutes later with her hair pulled back nice, and it's fine. She gets into it—the champagne, the fire—it's perfect in her book as far as I can tell. The touching reunion I won't go into, but it's nice, we get a little tipsy, and pretty soon things lead to things and we're naked and, well, not our greatest performance, but it's good, I think; as things bode, this bodes well. We're lying there after, drinking up the last of it, and I lift my glass and say, "Zesty, with red stripes, a gurgly wine," and this of course I find incredibly funny and so I start giggling and can't stop, you know how that goes, I can't stop for four minutes. And she's laughing a little, too; granted, not uncontrollable like me, but it's not as if I'm laughing alone. And finally I—we—settle down, and she looks at me and says, "Hey, we insipid types got to stick together, right?"

So it's something I can live with, I figure. And I don't—I repeat, don't—open up another bottle that night. Later, she's in bed, I wait till the supermarket log-thing burns down, crumbling up in that blue flame it has, and then I throw my champagne glass into it, and it smashes—smash!—just like Count What's-his-name, or whatever.

Bowling

253 was my high game. They couldn't believe it—Anna, Sybil. "Beginner's luck!", as if we hadn't been playing off and on for a year and a half already. I had a perfect game going until the fourth frame. Anna, she regularly bowls in like the mid-200s, even she couldn't touch me. She ended with a 239

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or something. Afterwards they all bought me a drink and said I was possessed by the devil in charge of bowling.

All I can say is, thank God it was after the men stopped coming. No, I'm kidding. Well, maybe. Ty would've been furious. Ty's way of bowling is to shoot the ball straight down the alley at the head pin as hard as he could, and that of course always leaves the impossible 7-10 split, which means you're getting nines galore and you're lucky to break a hundred. He hated that, but when I told him to aim for the 1-3 pocket he'd just look at me and fume and say, "Roll the ball, Janet." Sybil thinks that's why they quit coming—we started getting better than them. One night after one game Harry tells us they're sitting the next one out, and Ty and Lance and him go over to the bar and order drinks. So, the four of us girls play, Elaine looking over every two minutes to make evil-eye contact with Harry, as if to say "Don't you dare"—Don't you dare what, none of us could ever figure out with those two, but you knew it was "Don't you dare something." So of course they drink too much, and of course Lance starts complaining about the price of electricity, just to get at Ty's goat, and of course Ty gets mad even though he knows it's just Lance being a jerk again. What a bunch! After two more games we've got to drive them all home, Sybil glorying with the I-told-you-so, and so we start coming by ourselves, just the four girls, and we all have a much better time from then on.

The 253 night was about five months later. Ty at home with his fish and his bottle of vino, as usual by that time. I never even told him about it. I came home he was sitting in the glow of the aquarium, glassy-eyed, three-quarters of the way through a bottle of who-knows-what. What can you say in a situation like that? "Guess what, honey, I knocked down more of those stupid white pins than I ever did before"? When your husband's pie-eyed in front of a bunch of fish every night?

"A gutter ball." That's what Sybil always calls him. We used to do that, we'd get together on our Tuesday nights sometimes, have a few drinks, and start talking in bowling terms while she braided my hair. "Ty is a gutter ball in the alley of life," she'd say. Course I can laugh about it now. Well, then,

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too, I couldn't help it. I'd turn around and say, "When he strikes me, I can only say, Oh spare me!" and of course we'd fall off her beanbag chairs onto the floor in hysterics. She even had a Bowling Theory of Life: Life is a tough split; you can either play it safe and go for the one pin, or else you can chance the narrow slice that'll either knock them both down or neither. She, she said, was trying for the slice; I had played it safe (and got a gutter ball anyway). This from the woman who had dated more losers than you can count on a calculator. Yes, she'd say, but I never married one.

She liked Angus, though. He'd come over all the time when it was just the four of us and flirt. He'd put his beer in one of those aluminum holes that nobody ever uses, sling his leg over the plastic chairs, and give us free games if we could guess what color underwear he was wearing (Crass, I know, but we liked him for trying so hard). First time he came over we thought he was some kind of bull artist—this big, red-haired guy with freckles, name of Angus McNooney (right), owns a half-share of the alley. All true, though, every word he ever told us. At first we thought he might be good for Sybil, being the only unattached one of us, but she would just laugh at us. Red hair made her gag, she'd say.

It started one night—Sybil was home with smoker's bronchitis, Elaine had already stopped coming, and Anna said she didn't feel like bowling just the two of us. So I went alone. I didn't want to lose my game. Angus comes over before I've bowled even two frames. "So where's the entourage?" he says. I laugh. And he says do I want a drink, he'll make sure they hold the lane for me. I counted to five in my head, I looked up at him, and I say, sure, who couldn't use a drink?

"Give Mrs. Steinbock anything she likes on my half of the house," he says to Henri, the bartender from I think Belgium, and so I order a Rob Roy, trying to make a joke, and he gets one too without cracking a smile, I can see he's as nervous as I am. That lovely round, muffled rumble of bowling going on behind us, I cross my legs and there are my feet all nicely done up in white socks and those wonderful comfortable blue bowling shoes Ty bought me when we were still coming together, and Angus all awkward like he never was before when there was the three or the four of us. We fin-

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ished the first drink, talking about Sybil and whatever else we can think of, and finally he says "You always smell like bread." I smile, and finally he smiles back, and there's a gurgle of pins being swept into the back of the machine, and he asks can he offer me another one, and I say—I really say it—"Don't I have to guess the colors anymore?"

We'd go dancing. Angus prided himself on his Lindy, and he was pretty good, even with his limp. Sometimes I'd get tired and he'd dance with someone else. He looked awkward and graceful at the same time, like an ostrich trying not to step in something. Or we'd watch old movie musicals on the VCR in his private office at the alley. He cried—really cried—at the end of *South Pacific* once. "A lovely story," he said in that touch of an accent he has. We'd go out to movies also. Or bars. And everything for free. It seemed like Angus owned a piece of every business in Bergen County. Always in control, Angus. All he had to do was sign his name to get anything he wanted. Well, almost. He'd drive me back to pick up my car at the alley, and I'd kiss him good night, once. Then I'd drive home and make up bowling scores to tell to Ty.

The first time I left Ty I knew I would end up at Angus'. I spent three nights on Sybil's beanbags and then moved in with him, Sybil covering for me in the Ty department. She, at least, was thrilled. President of the Angus McNooney Admiration Society. He had a college degree and some money, so she thought that he might just be good enough for me, despite the red hair. I wasn't ready, though. Even while I was taking down that green suitcase at home, I knew it wasn't time yet. I had never even been to Angus' apartment. He felt rushed too, though he never would say so. He'd just rub the back of his neck and look at the floor. The first week we went out dancing or drinking every night—like we were still going out on our dates—but when I told him I couldn't live that way, he looked hurt and then annoyed. Or he'd tell me, one night getting out of the car, that my hair shined "lovely silver in the moonlight," and then, two minutes later, he's impatient when I can't get my new keys to work in his locks, and we argue. Meanwhile, Ty's showing up at the bakery every day after work, buying crullers one by one and eating them in

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front of me until I have to tell Audrey to stop selling him any. God, I was confused. Sybil said, "Stay, stay," but I wasn't sure. Why couldn't I do anything right?

Finally, one night we're in bed and Angus turns to me, very casually, and he tells me there's not enough nuance in my lovemaking. Not enough nuance. This from Mr. What-color-are-my-Jockey-shorts. I got out of bed and slept on the white shag rug on the living room floor. And he didn't come after me. Next night he goes to the alley without me and I call Ty: "Put a log on the fire, honey; I'm coming home." And it was nice, really. He opened up a bottle of special champagne and we had kind of a romantic reunion. I had decided what I wanted. At least I could sit quietly with this man. I could make my own happiness. Next morning I rubbed flour into my hands and baked myself the biggest loaf of pure, unbleached whole wheat our oven could hold. Bun in the oven, bun in the oven.

Babies

They are merciless, you can quote me on that. I knew it was a bad idea from the beginning. Like we didn't have enough to handle already.

The guys out at PSE&G, they'd have babies, it would ruin them. They'd be good for zero until ten, eleven o'clock—bags under the eyes you could pack ice into.

I thought we were in agreement on this point. One time we're out with this guy from work, Warren, and his wife, at this Italian place, Clams Casino or whatever. The third time they've left their kid with a sitter, so we figure they'll be relieved to get away from it all for a night. Wrong, of course. Warren's on about teething, for chrissake, and what's-her-name's on about strained peaches. Abigail, Martha, some old-fashioned name like that. The kid's Brendan, after the old governor, they said. It's like everything had the kid's fuckin' name on it. The linguini reminds her of Brendan, who the fuck knows, and the waitress is six months pregnant, so God, we've gotta talk to the waitress for fifteen minutes about obstetricians before we can order. I told Janet later, I told her if

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they said aloud what the fuckin' summer squash reminded them of I was standing up and walking out of that place, fellow area supervisor or no, and she laughed. She *agreed* with me.

I mean, this is not a popular position, I realize it, but Jesus. And, I mean, Janet thought so too. I thought she thought, at least. Then she hits me with it. Two months after she came back that time: We're at the table after dinner, polishing off the second bottle of, I remember it was Schloss Vollrads Kabinett, very easy on the way down, and we were feeling pretty good. It was a tough week for her at work, she said (as if nobody else has tough weeks? I mean, at least she brings home a couple of lemon pies and we get fat on her tough weeks). So, in sum, it was a Friday, and we were kind of celebrating the end of this tough week, I guess. She looked pretty ragged, actually, and once that week I woke up in the night and she was biting the pillow—I mean really biting it, like almost ripping the fabric—and she said it was something about some asshole customer, I don't know. So we're at the table and she drops this megaton thing on me. I'm, like, what the fuck? Are you serious? And she says, I think it will help us. I say, like fuck (I'm kind of upset at this point), I say, I'm sorry, it can't be done, she says it already has been, I say Jesus fucking Christ. I am not a violent man. Janet has this thing, I mean, I'm no match for her. You've heard of the unstoppable force? Jesus f-ing Christ. So we have a baby.

I felt like I had nothing to do in this process. Janet's reading the books, seeing the doctors. I ask, can I come along, she says I'll just get bored, I say, maybe I like bored, she says why, I don't want the kid anyway. And she's right. I'm sorry, what can I say? I'm some kind of monster, right?

All the time I know she's doing it for herself is all. No, not all. But where am I in the picture? At the hospital the nurse comes out and says "Who's Mr. Steinbock?" it takes me ten seconds to say "Here."

First two months, the kid's got this vomit problem. Vomit everywhere, every hour of the day, we spend half my salary at the laundry. That's another thing—only one salary now, kiss the Moet goodbye for the next twenty-five years, I say. I can't stay in the house some nights. I take up running, but

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my knee is kind of my Achilles' heel and all we've got is hard pavement to run on by us and who wants to have to drive to a park to jog a lousy two miles?

It's like two against one at this point. I'd get this idea that the kid waits until I'm holding him to vomit. I'm holding him once when Janet's in the kitchen warming up some formula. All of a sudden, the kid gets this, like, weird smile? He's looking up at me, and he's got this incredible grin on his face. So I take him out to the kitchen and say, "Jan, look, he's laughing at me, for godsake." Then—blup!—white throw-up all over the front of my navy sweatshirt. Janet smiles then and takes him out of my arms. "Watch that the formula doesn't boil over," she says on her way to the bathroom.

It's unbelievable. Like the two of them had this secret plan. By the way, it's a boy. Benjamin is his name. Her idea. I never heard of a baby Benjamin in my life. All her fucking idea.

They live in Rockland County now—her and the kid—with some red-haired Irish guy she met at work or something. She lets me see him once every two weeks, but Jesus. She says it's mine, she swears on a stack of Bibles it is. Fuck, it's got my nose, any jerk can see it. God knows what she'll tell him about me when he gets old enough.

I'm thinking, it's like, boom, two months after we're married, she's got me pegged. I hold Sybil responsible, partly. "I told you so" was all she ever could say to Janet. "The soul of a plumber," Janet told me once. Like she expected romance? You see what you want to see in things.

The baby was what did it. I think without Benjamin we could've, I don't know. Done it. Benjamin. I remember standing over his crib once, a few weeks old. There's this Bozo the Clown nightlight by the crib, and that's all the light, and the kid's smelling like turpentine, god knows where from or how. He's finally asleep, after crying and vomiting for five, six straight hours, even the doctor doesn't know what the hell is wrong with him. I'm standing there, looking down at him, you know, when you're supposed to be getting all those warm paternal feelings? Well, all I can think is: "What the fuck is it with you? Where do you hurt, for godsake?" Then, all of a sudden, his mouth goes, like he's sucking Janet's tit, up down up down, like he's saying something. Hey Dad. Fuck off.

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That's the thing about babies. They look like the bait, but they're really the trap.

Benjamin

Everyone was against it—Sybil, Ty, my mother—so I knew I was doing the right thing. And Angus wouldn't know, I decided, until I started showing. He'd see me getting bigger by the day, straining at the waist of the old bowling slacks, waddling toward the foul line. He'd think: God, thank God she left, I'd've been saddled with a middle-aged chubster with no nuance. Then, finally, one night it would hit him: no carbohydrate binge this; no, this was serious; this was a seriousness of life he would never know. I wanted to see his red face turn redder when he realized it.

I knew what I wanted to do the day I went back to Ty. It happened that very night, in fact; during our little romantic tryst in front of the artificial log. I told him the thing was in and it wasn't. Good old Ty—whatever else he is, at least he's fertile.

When I told him, he exploded—literally. I had expected some shock waves, but God. You'd think I was telling him I wanted to leave again. He knocked half a bottle of wine on the floor, and for Ty that's something. He even tried to knock me on the floor, but, well. . . . It really must be frustrating for him. He yelled like a madman; he stormed around the apartment, throwing pillows against the wall. I stood over the stove, making tea. Nothing in the world was going to stop me. If Ty kicked me out, I'd go to Sybil's and have the baby on her beanbag couch.

Well, he got used to it. Never gave in, but at least stopped trying to break unbreakable objects against the wall. I never pictured us as the LaMaze type anyway. I hate pain, and having Ty along saying "Push, honey, push" would've just annoyed me. So I went to Dr. Singh by myself. I'll take everything, I told him—laughing gas, Novocain, Gilbey's Gin, whatever. Let's just get it done.

I bowled until the beginning of the seventh month (against doctor's orders). By that time it was like Janet the Planet

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sweeping past the points, throwing a little black moon out of orbit and into outer space. My game suffered. And Angus stopped showing up. The first few weeks he'd hardly let me play, buying me drinks and trying to talk me back into his BMW. I'd just listen to him and say nothing, thinking of the little baby I had growing inside of me. A few more weeks and he'd just watch us from a stool at the bar. I hurt his pride, Sybil said. She and Anna said we could all go to a different alley up on 9W, but I said it was fine where we were, he didn't make me nervous. Then he stopped being there. Business, was all Henri would tell me. Something about a share in another movie theater. I never saw him after the fifth month. Just after I began to show.

It was an easy pregnancy. Dr. Singh said I was born to be a mother. Best pelvic structure he'd ever seen. "Like wings poised to embrace the child," he'd say as he slid that cold stethoscope disk over my belly. Two weeks before my due date, he gave me a book of poems he'd written and published himself—*Gift of the Hummingbird*. "Like wings poised to embrace the child" was on page 34, in a poem about snow, I think.

God, I loved the way I looked then! It sounds sick, I know, but it's true. I just loved the way my belly got so round and tight, like that antique globe my father got for me in sixth grade. I never thought I looked fat, really; just very, very pregnant. Ty was a little leery, especially near the end. "Are you really supposed to get that big?" he'd ask me when I got ready for bed.

Benjamin was born on a Saturday evening. I remember thinking that it was my bowling night. Ty was in the shower when I was first hit by "the prenatal drench and clench of determination" (that's *Gift of the Hummingbird*, page 44). I had to shout at him over the sound of running water: "It's time, Ty. Where's my crossword book to pack?" His hair was still wet when we pulled in at the emergency room. "I'll wait right here," he said. He was stepping back in the pink and blue maternity waiting room as they wheeled me through the swinging doors.

Anyway, it happened. I had a boy, Benjamin. Not too big; just about the size of one of Angel's special jumbo loaves of

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whole wheat. I saw his little blue scowl and knew right away that we'd get along just fine. "He looks mad," was all Ty would say, but when the nurse loaded Benjamin into his arms he looked up and smiled.

Next day I've got Benjamin for a breast feed when Angus appears, dressed in a green three-piece suit I didn't even know he had. First time I'd seen him in months. "He hasn't got red hair and freckles, if that's what you're looking for," I said. He said nothing; just stared at me and Benjamin for a minute. "How'd you get up here anyway? Visiting hours are over." He lifted the greasy paper bag in his hand and said, "I brought you two slices of pizza." Then he smiled and gave little Benjamin a pat on the ass.

Ty took the week off from the plant and stayed home with me, but I could tell his heart wasn't in it. The guys from the bakery had sent over a white cake with chocolate icing, and Ty cutting it was like someone cutting the cake at a funeral dinner. He sliced right through the message—"Benjamin Steinbock: Born to Run"—without even a whisper of a smile. He's always been sad-looking, like his forehead was too heavy for his eyebrows to keep up. After three days I talked him into going back to work. I told him I could manage perfectly well on my own and that they probably needed him at work. He liked that. He said, "Well, if you're sure. . . ."

When Angus started calling during the days, I really didn't want to hear what he had to say. I'd hang up on him, but he'd call back again and again. Finally, I'd talk to him, but only if he promised not to try to talk me into going back. I made him work, too; I'd make him guess what color the baby's eyes were today, and always said he was wrong, even when he wasn't. He'd tell me about this terrific house—"a great, comely place"—that he'd put a deposit down on—up in New York State, a three-bedroom near a lake—and I'd say "Oh." One day he sent over flowers and I had to flush them down the toilet before Ty came home. But in the end I went with him. I had to. Ty would never change; he would never even touch the baby unless I asked him to. So one morning Angus showed up with the BMW and we filled it with the baby stuff and a suitcase full of my clothes and we left. I left Ty a note: "I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry." And I called

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him—the next day, from Rockland County, thirty miles away. He cried on the phone and asked me what it was I wanted from him. "Four years, Jan!" he shouted at one point. And I had to hang up on him; he wouldn't say good-bye.

Anyway, here we are now—the three of us in this big brick house in the woods. We've gotten over our rocky period. Angus still goes out a lot, from his alley to his theater to his this and that. Ben and I stay home. When he throws up, I clean it; when he cries, I hug him and make funny noises at him; no nuance required.

Ty comes to see us every other Saturday, when Angus is away, going over receipts at the alley. He drives up and sits with us in the living room for an hour, talking about things at work. Most times he wears a tie, something he never does, and I can catch a whiff of Skin Bracer on his cheeks. Then, after the hour, he looks at his watch and gets up from the chair. He gives Benjamin a kiss, and then he bends that sad old face to me and we touch cheekbones. He drives away, and I say to myself, "That was the man that I married.'

I wish him well, I really do. I hope someday he wins something—a sweepstakes or a contest or whatever.

He's still living in that apartment, drinking his bottles of expensive wine. He looks tired now when I see him. I ask him why and he says it's the puppies. He's bought himself a pair of tiny Labrador retrievers. They keep him up at night.

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TED GIOIA

Jazz: The Aesthetics of Imperfection

I

Jelly Roll Morton, the celebrated New Orleans pianist and composer, once confided that he had invented jazz in 1902. Morton, as even his admirers admit, was a man prone to exaggeration, particularly on the subject of his own achievements. Yet even if we had no other reason to doubt him, this extraordinary claim would probably still make us uneasy. How could anyone *invent* jazz? It seems rather to be like electricity or North America—things not consciously invented, but only recognized, after the fact as it were, by some especially observant or fortunate individual.

Those with a taste for historical exactitude may feel comforted by imagining some definite date in the past when musicians, perhaps on cue from Jelly Roll or one of his contemporaries, threw away their written scores and started to improvise. The history of jazz, however, is scarcely so tidy—even the earliest Afro-American musicians were apparently playing without written parts, and improvisation, far from starting with jazz, has a rich history as old as music itself.

Yet improvisation, if not restricted to jazz, is nonetheless essential to it. Morton's music, as well as that of the other early jazz masters—Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, Sidney Bechet and others—reflects its central role. More than any of these artists' compositional or technical innovations, improvisation remains even today the most distinctive element of a jazz performance—so much so that a jazz instrumentalist is evaluated almost entirely on his ability to "take a solo." Certain composed works—Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, for example—may sound "jazzy," but what we hear is not jazz until the spontaneous element of improvisation is added to the written parts.

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For the trained musician, this calculated disregard of the written score can prove to be exasperating. Pianist Lilian Hardin, later to become Mrs. Louis Armstrong, studied music for three years at Fisk University before becoming involved with jazz. Yet such formal training was of little use when she auditioned for her first job in a jazz band. Hardin later recalled:

> When I sat down to play I asked for the music and were they surprised! They politely told me they didn't have any music and furthermore never used any. I then asked what key would the first number be in. I must have been speaking another language because the leader said, "When you hear two knocks, just start playing."
>
> It all seemed very strange to me, but I got all set, and when I heard those two knocks I hit the piano so loud and hard they all turned around to look at me. It took only a second for me to feel what they were playing and I was off.[1]

Yet if improvisation is the essential element in jazz, it is also the most problematic. Perhaps the only way of appreciating its peculiarity is by imagining what other art forms would be like if they placed an equal emphasis on improvisation. Imagine T.S. Eliot giving nightly poetry readings at which, rather than reciting set pieces, he was expected to create impromptu poems—different ones each night, sometimes recited at a fast clip; imagine giving Hitchcock or Fellini a handheld motion picture camera and asking him to film something—anything—at that very moment, without the benefits of script, crew, editing, or scoring; imagine Matisse or Dali giving nightly exhibitions of his skills—exhibitions at which paying audiences would watch him fill up canvas after canvas with paint, often with only two or three minutes devoted to each "masterpiece."

These examples strike us as odd, perhaps even ridiculous, yet conditions such as these are precisely those under which the jazz musician operates night after night, year after year. Jazz demands that the artist create something new and different at every performance; musicians who "cheat" by playing the same or similar solos over and over again are looked down upon by colleagues and fans. In 1978, David Hollenberg wrote in criticism of a performance by pianist Ray Bryant:

[1] Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya* (New York, 1955), p. 93.

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> How much is improvised? Tonight, Bryant played *After Hours* in a note-for-note copy of the way he played it on the *Dizzy, Rollins, and Stitt* album on Verve some fifteen years ago. Was it written then? Or worse. Has he transcribed and memorized his own solo, as if it were an archeological classic? It was fine blues piano indeed, but it is odd to hear it petrified in this way. Similarly, Bryant concluded each set tonight with a gospelish blues (in C, of course) that was, note-for-note, the same both times. The hall had been cleared at the break, so the few of us that snuck through both sets were faced with the strange fact that some of the freest sounding pieces of the evening were the most mechanical.[2]

Here it is not the musical quality of Bryant's performance that is under attack—Hollenberg admits that the piece in question was "fine blues piano indeed"; instead, it is the lack of the crucial improvisational element which disturbs the critic.

Bryant's case is not unusual. Most jazz musicians find it far easier to rely on certain stock phrases which have proved themselves effective in past performances than to push themselves to create fresh improvisations. Albert Lord, in his landmark work *The Singer of Tales*,[3] has shown that this practice is also common to the oral poetry tradition and probably reaches back to Homer if not earlier. The daunting task of improvisation, whether in music or poetry, can scarcely be achieved without some reliance on these memorized phrases. Even so, Hollenberg's criticism is justified: any style that is based entirely on these clichés rarely sustains our interest. For the jazz musician this conflict between his need for spontaneity and his equally strong desire to stay within the confines of the familiar lies at the heart of his music. This is an aesthetic choice he cannot avoid. And though some have suggested that jazz is an intuitive art which defies conscious reflection and, hence, has little to do with aesthetic decisions, in this instance I would argue that they are wrong. Jazz is as much an intellectual art as an emotional one.

II

Yet does not jazz, by its reliance on spur-of-the-moment improvisation, relegate itself to being a second-rate, imperfect

[2] David Hollenberg, "Caught: Ray Bryant," *Downbeat*, May 18, 1978, p. 42.
[3] Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

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art form? Does not its almost total lack of structure make even the best jazz inferior to mediocre composed music? Why, we ask, should the spontaneous prattle of an improvising musician interest us as much as the meticulously crafted masterpieces of the great composers? The dilemma jazz faces was stated with clarity by composer Elliott Carter, when he suggested that the musical score serves the essential role of preventing "the performer from playing what he already knows and leads him to explore other new ideas and techniques."[4]

One is tempted to reply that some of the most gifted composers of Western music—Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Chopin—were themselves skilled improvisers who took great interest in the challenge of spontaneous creation. But this is more of an evasion than an answer. That Mozart improvised in his spare time is no more a reason for glorifying improvisation than is the fact that Mozart enjoyed bawdy jokes a reason for elevating them into an art form.

Our problem remains, and despite its neglect by most jazz critics, it is the central problem of jazz criticism. It has become commonplace to assert that jazz is an "art"; yet those who glibly pronounce this word seldom move on to a discussion of how jazz compares (if at all) with the established arts. If jazz music is to be accepted and studied with any degree of sophistication, we must develop an aesthetic that can cope with that music's flaws as well as its virtues.

It is hardly worth noting that the improvisations of Beethoven could scarcely have been as perfect as his compositions; still I feel confident that I am not alone in being willing to exchange—were such an exchange possible—a half-dozen of his written works for just one recording of Beethoven improvising at the keyboard. Can I justify this desire on the grounds of something more than idle curiosity? Must improvised art be branded as second-rate art?—as art which is necessarily less worthy of our attention than that which is the result of careful planning? If we hope to elaborate a conceptual framework which will allow us to accept jazz on its own terms—and not as the bastard child of composed music—we

[4] From John Rockwell's *All American Music* (New York, 1983), p. 166.

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must develop what I would like to call an "aesthetics of imperfection."

An aesthetics of jazz would almost be a type of non-aesthetics. Aesthetics, in principle if not in practice, focuses our attention on those attributes of a work of art which reveal the craftsmanship and careful planning of the artist. Thus the terminology of aesthetic philosophy—words such as form, symmetry, balance—emphasizes the methodical element in artistic creation. But the improviser is anything but methodical; hence these terms have only the most tangential applicability to the area of jazz. The very nature of jazz demands spontaneity; were the jazz artist to approach his music in a methodical and calculated manner, he would cease to be an improviser and become a composer. For this reason the virtues we search for in other art forms—symmetry, design, balance between form and content—are largely absent from jazz. In his act of impulsive creation, the improvising musician must shape each phrase separately while retaining only a vague notion of the overall pattern he is forging. Like the great chessplayer who, we are told, must be able to plan his attack some dozens of moves ahead, the jazz musician's opaque medium forces him to struggle to create a coherent musical statement. But, unlike the chessplayer, he is not given nearly unlimited time. His is an art markedly unsuited for the patient and reflective.

III

Perhaps this unremitting emphasis on spontaneity helps to explain the peculiar personalities of so many of jazz's most noted practitioners. If the jazz artist is impatient and unpredictable, it is only because his art stresses precisely those mercurial qualities. This is not to say that the jazz life breeds unreliability or instability. The line of causation probably moves in the opposite direction: the jazz world offers a creative outlet for the musical talents who, for often unrelated reasons, lack the patience and decorum to succeed in the more traditional areas of musical activity. One can scarcely imagine a Charlie Parker or a Lester Young thriving in a situation

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which demanded the production of elaborate symphonic scores, or the ability to survive in the environment of the conservatory or university music department. For artists such as these, jazz provides the most suitable area in which they can develop and exercise their talents. Indeed, only a particular type of temperament would be attracted to an art form which values spur-of-the-moment decisions over carefully considered choices, which prefers the haphazard to the premeditated, which views unpredictability as a virtue and sees cool-headed calculation as a vice. If Mingus, Monk, Young, and Parker had been predictable and dependable individuals, it seems unlikely that their music could have remained unpredictable and innovative.

Even the most dispassionate admirer of jazz must find it unsettling to dwell upon the recurring historical correlation between improvisational brilliance and mental instability among jazz's foremost musicians. This disturbing tradition, as old as jazz itself, stretches back to the enigmatic turn-of-the-century figure Buddy Bolden—by most accounts the first musician to play New Orleans-style jazz—whose performing career was cut short in 1906 by his lapse into paranoid schizophrenia. For another quarter of a century Bolden survived in a mental institution, finally succumbing to "cerebral arterial sclerosis" in November, 1931; but his music was scarcely so long-lived: it is known to us only through intriguing and often contradictory descriptions by those who had heard Bolden play. About the only detail these accounts agree on is the loudness of Bolden's playings. The classic account is Morton's, which describes how Bolden's horn could be heard ten or twelve miles away on a clear, still night.[5] In the words of Frankie Dusen: "Bolden blew the loudest horn in the world."[6] Another old-time jazzman remarked on another aspect of Bolden's playing which is perhaps more to the point, at least in its emphasis on the acute psychological pressure which an improvising musician can bring to bear on himself in attempting to remain innovative and creative: "That fellow studied too hard," he said of Bolden, "always trying to think up

[5] Alan Lomax, *Mr. Jelly Roll* (Berkeley, 1950), p.60.
[6] Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden* (New York, 1978), p. 102.

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something to bring out. He could hear you play something and keep it in his head—then go home and think up parts."[7] Morton's evocative characterization of Bolden's disorder is hardly so elegant: "he went crazy because he really blew his brains out through the trumpet."[8] Bolden's recurring appearance in jazz lore as an almost legendary founding-figure serves as an apt, if somewhat distressing, reminder of how often jazz's foremost practitioners have lingered at the far end of eccentricity and on the borderline of mental disorder.

In any event few can deny that, as jazz developed, its leading innovators began using their music to display a frenzied, devil-may-care attitude which stressed the most demanding elements in the improvisational process. At the same time this more "progressive" approach to the music was well suited to the technical virtuosity which many postwar jazz artists brought to their craft.

These founders of modern jazz—Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell—favored breakneck tempos, far faster than those of even the most spirited numbers of the big band era. Whatever time the early jazz musician had to contemplate his solo leisurely as he played it was soon forsaken as modern jazz developed. Parker and Gillespie attacked the chord progressions of songs such as "Cherokee" and "I've Got Rhythm" at such furious tempos that the soloist often had only a mere second to adjust to a chord before the next one was upon him. Hitherto jazz had relied upon the spontaneous creativity of its musicians, but now it seemed that it was their reflexes that were being tested. To the old-timers of jazz, these frantic and frenetic performances could be quite unnerving. Even an intelligent and adventurous swing era musician like Dave Tough found his first experience with modern jazz to be a frightening one. Tough recalled:

> As we walked in, see, these cats snatched up their horns and blew crazy stuff. One would stop all of a sudden and another would start for no reason at all. We could never tell when a solo was supposed to begin or end. Then they all quit at once and walked off the stand. It scared us.[9]

[7] Alan Lomax, p. 60.
[8] Alan Lomax, p. 60.
[9] Marshall Stearns, *The Story of Jazz* (New York, 1956), pp. 224–225.

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The heirs of the beboppers valued these same attributes: speed, virtuosity, intensity, and stamina. With the recording of John Coltrane's composition "Giant Steps" in 1959, the development of these musical obstacle courses reached a level of complexity that was almost perverse in the demands it made on the soloist.

With the coming of the new wave of avant garde jazz musicians, the improvisational element in jazz was further emphasized in a different manner. Earlier generations had incorporated improvised solos into a framework of music that was still largely composed. If we study the earliest jazz recordings, we notice that only a small portion of the music was devoted to improvised solos; even in early modern jazz a great number of compositional elements remained—with the beboppers at least the harmonic progressions and some melodic lead lines were set in advance. But with the assault of the avant garde, even these last vestiges of composed music were often discarded. This reliance on "total" improvisation had been attempted earlier by Lennie Tristano and other progressive musicians of the "cool" school of jazz, but these tentative forays into the unknown were only child's play when compared with the more iconoclastic works of the next generation of innovators. (Perhaps it is misleading to speak of "generations" in the context of jazz where important innovations are separated by only a few years. Harmonic developments which occurred over centuries in classical music take hold in the jazz world over a few decades; the development of jazz harmony between 1940 and 1960 is in many ways equivalent to—because parasitic on—the developments in Western harmony between 1780 and 1920.)

By the time we reach the early seventies, total improvisation had spread from the avant garde back into mainstream jazz. Keith Jarrett's *Solo Concerts*, released during this period, contains two hours of highly melodic and easily accessible music, not a single note of which was composed in advance; Jarrett claims to enter his solo concerts with no preconceived notions of what he is to play, and his confident reliance on the inspiration of the moment is at times almost frightening.

What we have seen in the history of jazz is an increasing reliance on the improvisational element. Even with the earli-

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est practitioners this aspect was present, but as jazz matured improvisation came to play a greater and greater role, at first accounting for less than half of the music, now often accounting for almost all of it. As though it were following some musical law of entropy, jazz has evolved away from the firm ground of composed music towards the *terra incognita* of complete improvisation. Accordingly, if improvisation is, as I have claimed, the problematic element in jazz, it has only become more so with the passing of time. Some see this increasing reliance on improvisation as a step towards total artistic freedom; others, less sanguine, see the music falling into the abyss of formlessness.

IV

Certainly it is wrong to claim that there is *no* form in improvisational music; it is rather a different type of form. We must distinguish between two different ways of adhering to form if we are to understand how jazz differs from most of the other arts. I would like to call these two different types of form the blueprint method and the retrospective method.

The blueprint method is most clearly represented, as one might gather from its name, in architecture. Here the artist plans in advance every detail of the work of art before beginning any part of its execution. For the architect this plan takes the form of a blueprint; for the painter it is revealed in preliminary sketches; for the novelist it is contained in outlines and rough drafts.

Some may feel that the blueprint method is the only method by which an artist can adhere to form. But I believe this judgment to be quite wrong. We can imagine the artist beginning his work with an almost random maneuver, and then adapting his later moves to this initial gambit. For example, the musical improviser may begin his solo with a descending five-note phrase and then see, as he proceeds, that he can use this same five-note phrase in other contexts in the course of his improvisation.

This is, in fact, what happens in Charlie Parker's much analyzed improvisation on Gershwin's "Embraceable You."

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Parker begins with a five-note phrase (melodically similar to the "you must remember this" phrase in the song "As Time Goes By") which he employs in a variety of ingenious contexts throughout the course of his improvisation. Parker obviously created this solo on the spot (only a few minutes later he recorded a second take with a completely different solo, almost as brilliant as the first), yet this should not lead us to make the foolish claim that his improvisation is formless.

Improvisation follows not the blueprint method but the retrospective method. The improviser may be unable to look ahead at what he is going to play, but he can look behind at what he has just played; thus each new musical phrase can be shaped with relation to what has gone before. The same technique can be applied to the other arts, but this is generally the exception rather than the rule. A noteworthy example would be Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, which was reputedly typed on a roll of paper instead of on individual sheets; thus the novel was written in a continuous manner without the benefit of rewrites. (It is perhaps worth noting that Kerouac was one of Charlie Parker's greatest admirers, and remarked at least once that he would like his writings viewed as a kind of literary counterpart to a jazz improvisation.) Kerouac's novel is a rare exception, if only because most artists want to take advantage of any benefits that may accrue from careful planning or rewriting.

Typically the retrospective method will be employed either by the artist who is extremely impatient, or else by one who is under acute time pressure. One of the clearest examples of this institutionalized haste is found in early Italian fresco painting. The gesso on which the fresco was painted dried very quickly and the artist was obliged to complete that portion of the painting with great speed. Bill Evans, in his liner notes to Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*, describes a similar approach found in a school of Japanese art:

> . . . the artist is forced to be spontaneous. He must paint on a thin stretched parchment with a special brush and black water paint in such a way that an unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break through the parchment. Erasures or changes are impossible. These artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with

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their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere.[10]

The notion that deliberation interferes with the artistic process fits well with the spontaneous demands of improvisation, yet is at odds with the much different attitude found in those arts built upon the blueprint method. Examples from the visual arts notwithstanding, jazz is the most extreme example of a reliance on retrospective form. Although other performance arts (theater, choreography) have experimented with improvisation, such attempts have usually been peripheral to the art form as a whole; certainly none have allowed improvisation to play as dominant a role as has become the case with jazz. The reasons for this, as we shall presently see, are all the more interesting when one discovers that they are completely external to the art forms themselves.

V

Who has exerted the greatest influence on twentieth-century art? Joyce? Pound? Eliot? Picasso? Le Corbusier? Most would dismiss such a question as being alluring yet fruitless. The artistic pantheon is the truest exemplar of pluralism—works of art are incommensurable, particularly when the works in question are taken from different artistic realms. How can we assert that Picasso's *Guernica* is more important than Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* when we are unsure of the very grounds on which such comparisons should be made? For this reason, the conventional logic goes, it is best to leave such ratings to those who evaluate prizefighters or hit records.

But even with this acknowledged, I still believe that there was one person whose influence on twentieth-century art surpassed the rest, and this is all the more peculiar when we consider that he himself was not an artist. I am referring to Thomas Alva Edison. The influence of this autodidact inventor from Milan, Ohio, is probably overlooked for the simple

[10] From the liner notes to Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* (Columbia PC 8163).

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reason that it is so pervasive; his inventions set off repercussions in ways that Edison himself would never have understood. His invention of the motion picture camera was his clearest contribution to the arts; not only did this development make the cinema possible, but Edison's own early forays into filmmaking were among the most significant demonstrations of the potential of this art form.

But there is at least one more art form indebted to Edison—jazz. In 1877 Edison was the first to apply already existing technology in inventing the phonograph; now for the first time sounds could be recorded with the same precision that books achieved in recording words. Few realize how important the existence of the phonograph was to the development of improvised music. Hitherto, the only method of preserving musical ideas was through notation, and here the cumbersome task of writing down parts made any significant preservation of improvisations unfeasible. But with the development of the phonograph, improvised music could take root and develop; improvising musicians who lived thousands of miles apart could keep track of each other's development, and even influence each other without ever having met.

With this in mind I believe we can now answer the question posed in the last section. Why has improvised music reached a level of sophistication not found in, for example, improvised theater or improvised dance? The reason is clear: the development of the phonograph made it possible for musical improvisers throughout the world to share a common heritage and react to the innovations of others. Perhaps with the introduction of low-cost video recorders we may see improvisational theater follow a similar path.

This is not to make the absurd claim that jazz did not exist before it was recorded; in fact jazz had been developing in New Orleans for some two decades before the historic recording session of February 26, 1917, at which the Original Dixieland Jass Band (ironically a group containing only white musicians) made the first jazz record. Yet the existence of the recording industry was necessary if jazz was to develop at all, rather than die out as a passing fad or persist as mere folk music. The clarinet player Buster Bailey claimed that the musicians in Memphis began to improvise only after they had

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heard recordings made by the New Orleans players. As the jazz scholar James Lincoln Collier has noted, before jazz was preserved on records it "was an obscure folk music played mainly by a few hundred blacks and a handful of whites in New Orleans, and rarely elsewhere."[11]

These early recordings found a ready audience and other bands sprang up to fill the public's demand for jazz. Only two years after these first recordings were made, Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke, who was destined to be one of the legendary figures of early jazz, developed his own style by studying them. His biographer describes how Bix would place the wind-up gramophone to the left of the family piano and pick out the lead instrument's melody note for note. To catch the more complex phrases he would slow down the gramophone manually. Only through this laborious imitation of recorded jazz was Beiderbecke able to develop his own celebrated style.[12]

This reliance on recordings was repeated again and again by most of jazz's greatest innovators. Most jazz scholars agree that the turning point in Charlie Parker's musical development occurred when Parker began studying and memorizing the recorded improvisations of tenor saxophonist Lester Young. The number of instrumentalists who have benefitted from studying Parker's own recordings is legion—it would include virtually every noteworthy jazz saxophonist under forty years of age. Time and time again it has been the recording, rather than the live performance, that has propelled the development of jazz over the past sixty-five years.

By the time Thomas Edison died in 1931, jazz had swept the nation; the second generation of jazz musicians—Duke Ellington, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young—had already begun performing. President Hoover, wishing to mark Edison's passing with an elaborate ceremonial gesture, suggested that the great dynamos which provided America with power should be stopped for three minutes in honor of the man who had contributed so much to American technology. Hoover's advisers rejected the plan; the consequences of shutting America down, even for only a few minutes, would be cata-

[11] James Collier, *The Making of Jazz* (New York, 1978), p. 72.
[12] Richard Sudhalter and Philip Evans, *Bix: Man and Legend* (London, 1974), pp. 35–39.

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strophic. Edison, it seems, had helped to unleash powers which no one could now stop, and the implications of which Edison himself had only vaguely grasped. In the world of art as well, Edison's pioneering inventions unleashed forces which are still reverberating in those two great art forms—the cinema and jazz—which were born in our own century.

VI

After having seen how peculiar jazz is, in comparison with the other arts, we may despair of justifying it as a true art form rather than as an elaborate craft. Improvisation is doomed, it seems, to offer a pale imitation of the perfection attained by composed music. Errors will creep in, not only in form, but also in execution; the improviser, if he sincerely attempts to be creative, will push himself into areas of expression which his technique may be unable to handle. Too often the finished product will show moments of rare beauty intermixed with technical mistakes and aimless passages. Why then are we interested in this haphazard art? What we are talking about is, as I have stressed, an aesthetics of imperfection. Can our imperfect art still stand proudly alongside its more graceful brothers—painting, poetry, the novel, etc.—in the realm of aesthetic beauty?

Clearly any set of aesthetic standards which seeks perfection or near-perfection in the work of art will find little to praise in jazz. Yet this approach, however prevalent, is not the only valid way of evaluating works of art. A contrasting, if not complementary attitude looks at the art not in isolation but in relation to the artist who created it; it asks whether that work is expressive of the artist, whether it reflects his own unique and incommensurable perspective on his art, whether it makes a statement without which the world would be, in some small way, a lesser place. This, I believe, is precisely the attitude toward art that delights in jazz. We enjoy improvisation because we take enormous satisfaction in seeing what a great musical mind can create spontaneously. We are interested in what the artist can do, given the constraints of his art. We evaluate Louis Armstrong or Charlie Parker not

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by comparing him to Beethoven or Mozart, but by comparing him to other musicians working under similar constraints, and our notions of excellence in jazz thus depend on our understanding of the abilities of individual artists and not on our perception of perfection in the work of art. In short, we are interested in the finished product (the improvisation) not as an autonomous object, but as the creation of a specific person. When we listen to Charlie Parker's records we take delight in probing the depths of his abilities as an artist, and even his failures interest us because they tell us about the musician who created them.

This approach to jazz, I realize, goes against the grain of much recent criticism. The paradigm of the now dominant view is "deconstructive" criticism in which the work of art is viewed as totally divorced from the artist who created it. With this autonomy of the work of art, the artist's intentions in creating art are no longer of interest. Implicit in much earlier art criticism was the belief that it is permissible to interpret the work in ways the author never envisaged (this belief is at the foot of Freudian and Marxist interpretations), but with "deconstruction" the artist has completely disappeared—he is not even given the dubious honor of being psychoanalyzed. What we are left with is the bare work of art itself.

In this light, any defense of jazz based upon its ethos of individualism is bound to appear anachronistic. It focuses attention on the individual at the very time when he seems to have fallen out of favor with most critics and philosophers of art (and not only there: the last few decades have witnessed an attack on the individual in fields as disparate as sociology, history, anthropology, the theory of meaning, linguistics, the history of science, and psychoanalysis). An aesthetic based on the individual artist has always bothered many by its extreme implications. How few of us would agree with Ruskin's assertion that Gothic art is superior to other types of art, despite technical imperfections, because it gave scope to the creativity of the individual artist. Such a radically individualistic aesthetic has dangers of its own, but to a certain extent Ruskin is worth taking seriously: he calls attention to a simple, yet easily neglected fact, namely that art exists not in isolation but only as the product of an artist. Such a truth may temporarily

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elude the dispassionate spectator at an art museum or the reader of a novel, but it is ever present to those in attendance at a jazz performance. In its own odd way, jazz has perhaps the most firm ethos of individualism of all the arts.

Traditional approaches to aesthetics which search for platonic ideals of art—which often present high culture as the consumption of polished and perfected "masterpieces"—are not without their merits. An appreciation of the human, and hence imperfect element of art could, however serve to counter the obvious excesses of such a critical attitude pursued in isolation. The viewer of art, whether critic or spectator, can and should be more than a mere consumer of impersonal objects—he can legitimately attend both to the realities of the work of art and to the creative act which produced it.

Thus, an aesthetics of imperfection, one which accepts this human element in art, may not be restricted to jazz, but might be valuable in shaping our attitudes towards other artistic disciplines. Such an attitude, like jazz itself, is bound to seem peculiar in the light of recent intellectual trends. Yet by confronting the apparent imperfections of jazz, we may come to find that these so-called peculiarities are the common ground of all artistic endeavors. Our interest in the creative artist, far from being an immature obsession with cultural "heroes," may lie at the heart of our appreciation of even the most disinterested and "perfect" art.

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MICHAEL VAN WALLEGHEN

Starship Lands in Cornfield!

—Headline, *Weekly World News*

A flying saucer has landed
upside down in a cornfield.

Except for being upside down
it looks scarcely damaged . . .

But one hears shouts in there—
throttled shrieks, a nickering

of pure, animal panic. Lights
or a kind of sentient glimmering

as in the eyes of beached whales
surface dimly in the portholes

and then sink back . . . *Nothing.*
No hope. Prepare yourselves.

Thus, one imagines, the captain
speaking to his crew. Meanwhile

across the highway, a schoolbus
pulls up and mutters to itself

beside a ditch of rusty ice . . .
It seems to be waiting on them:

the children from the starship.
Clumsy, alien, entirely at odds

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with a lingering or fiery death
on this planet, they dawdle along

as if they had forever, hypnotized
by anything. Dogs, for instance.

Three dogs—mud-colored, snarling—
one with a glove in his mouth

charge furiously up and down
between some half built houses—

delicate, ovicular dream houses
mired in a watery field littered

with corn stalks, squid shadows
the sudden darkness of the shark.

The Afterlife

Because all of it happens
at the speed of light

the soul naturally lingers
curious, appalled I think

near the impetuous corpse . . .
and as for all that whispering

from beyond the bright doorway
let them wait. I remember

when I was about ten or so
hitting my head on the ice

then waking up in the hospital

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anonymous and all attention

beside a dead man. The man
had a hole in his neck . . .

I could identify the windpipe
but various other things

were in the dark. His hand
was close to my hand, one foot

hung off the cart . . . Someone
a name that would come to me

had simply dumped him there
slumped in his tangled IVs

like a let go puppet. He knew
precisely who I was. The logic

of his bloodshot, puppet eye
was inescapable. The windows

too, were inescapable, black,
the coldest dream of winter . . .

All the rivers were frozen—
trashcans wandered in the street

like tumbleweed. A child's name
in fact, might wander years

without a coat out there
without a hat or even socks

and I tried not to think of him
huddled under the overpass

or sleeping in doorways
too cold to speak.

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Peach Isle

First the sky turns green, then
green-black, crepitating, alive

with lightning. Car lights
start coming on, street lights

the lights in riverside apartments—
while on the river there begins

a cacophony of anxious whistles
thunder, the clangorous alarms

of a channel buoy, close by . . .
This is not a good idea Joe

I hear my mother say. Already
an icy spray has soaked us

to the bone. Our stupid oars
are useless. We bobble merely

in the wake of motorboats, yachts—
everyone fleeing for cover but us

and the keening ore-boat dreadnoughts
anchored in the gloom above Peach Isle

our Sunday paradise and picnic spot.
I'm six weeks old on this picnic

an infant Jonah, fitfully asleep
still dreaming the panicky instant

of his own conception—dreaming
monstrous fish, the destruction

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of cities, all the Hieronymus
Bosch landscapes of 1938 . . .

Let's throw him overboard Bernice
my father whispers. Otherwise

it starts to rain—egg-sized hail
starts bouncing from the seats

and we huddle there like refugees
machine-gunned in their dinghy . . .

Sinking instantly, sucked down
like the swatted flies I'd throw

years later, when the war was over
to sunfish on our bright lagoon—

eight years old, mysteriously alive
a stormy prince living with impostors.

Who's There?

Someone at the window
rigid, afraid to move
her head half turned

as if she heard something—
voices, just now, back
inside the house somewhere . . .

Outside, the yellow trees
are flecked with robins
preparing their migrations

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and in the done for garden
where nothing grows so well
as hemlock now, or nightshade
or the sudden, deadly amanita

the fatalist rabbit
gives pause too—

a soft, peach light
lighting up the whole
cathedral of his ear.

Who's there?

No one. Another mouse perhaps.
Birds aflutter in the chimney . . .

Who's there?

Small leaves in a whirlwind
and the bright trees faltering
for a moment, like candles
in an upstairs window . . .

And so it is at middle age—
the spirit grows apprehensive
in the dark, autumnal house
of the body . . .

Turn on the T.V. for Christ's sake.
We can watch the news at least.

Or one can sit here listening . . .
the palest avatars of frost
forcing up the floorboards

whispering their benedictions
among the fat blue flies
dying on the windowsill.

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HERBERT MORRIS

Lincoln's Hat

Whatever you may have been told, or not told,
whatever is implied, or not implied,
stated, if stated, firmly, perfect pitch,
however worthy or instructive reading
Lives of the Famous may be, as suggested,
biography will be to no avail,
none whatever. All we needed to know,
parched for that rain of intimacy, famished
for the food of bright, riveting detail
(the portion small but crucial, the detail
minor, perhaps, but telling, with the eyes closed,
half-closed, glimpsed at a distance, sumptuous,
so glittering we cannot take it in
adequately, at first glance, wide-eyed, close range),
everything that might have instructed us,
even possibly saved us, will be left out:
who the man was, may have been; if he dreamt,
what he dreamt; what the years were; what he longed for.
(Mornings, he preferred eggs soft in the center,
wanted his coffee strong, was drawn to flowers
not too dazzling, those just a bit withdrawn—
the ones, if anything, you must approach,
not those which beckon to you—, liked those tunes
laced with "a goodly portion of true feeling,
sentiment, you might call it," favored women
not at all prepossessing, pallid, thin,
those who spoke shyly, seldom, if they spoke.
His skin had a dark, mottled cast—just shaved,
he looked as though he were unshaved—, his feet ached,
he had calluses, grew ring warts, slept poorly,
tossed on a mattress much too meager, dreamt,
felt palpitations, waking, suffered headaches.)

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Fact is what is presented us, not more,
the mere fact, or the plain fact, or the simple,
fact alone, which will tell us nothing, nothing.
Look, instead, to the edges, to the borders,
where a thing is itself but something more
(always somehow becoming something more),
to the peripheral, the inadvertent,
something no doubt at first glance partly missed,
or wholly missed, in our hunger to search
that face for clues, to take that map of anguish
(slowly, carefully) in one's hands and read it,
verse by verse, page by page, from end to end,
read it, read it again, and then again,
in the belief something may have escaped us
the first time, or the second, or the third—
the stains of perspiration on the shirtfront
(the walk long, the road dusty, the day hot,
the sun pouring its light, its angle steep,
the rows of headstones in the cemetery
glittering, blinding him, making him dizzy);
or the specific texture of the dust
gathering in the creases of his boots,
caked in the cross-stitch of the trouser cuff;
or, most remote of all, perhaps, the hat,
that hat by which, two blocks away, a stranger
might know, gait aside, who it was approaching,
who it was he might stop, pay his respects to
(Good morning to you, Mr. President.
I thought I recognized you from a distance.
I will let you be on your way, but know,
please know, we pray for you and wish you well
in doing what you will to end this bloodshed),
worn in all weather, almost an appendage,
an outgrowth of his body, of his life,
the hat known in the 60's as the stovepipe.
(Dear Mr. Lincoln, a child might have written,
the letter postmarked Quincy, Massachusetts,
scrawled on sheets torn from a penmanship tablet,
When I asked Momma why you wear a hat
which seems to all but hide your face beneath it,

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she allowed, as she did not have the answer,
I might put the question direct to you,
and so I do, meaning no disrespect.
My three little brothers, Momma and me
are of one mind in this—we take true pride
in you as President. You are a good man.
Yrs. truly. [P. S. Momma says to tell you
Poppa is fighting with the Union forces
at Petersburg and he thinks likewise too.]
We remember you each night in our prayers.)

The blackness of it is what strikes you first,
as black, say, as his beard, or as his boots;
as black as the sky on the ride from Springfield
on the night-coach, the trees luminous, wind
spreading its rumors through the leaves, the smell
of burning heavy on the air, pale smoke
ascending (guns?, flames?) in the distance, almost
imperceptibly, sleep not possible,
the route circuitous, the lurching fierce,
the axles rusting, the grinding incessant,
the motion, back, forth, this way, that, hypnotic,
one by one the passengers taking ill,
stammering, bathed in sweat, feverish, retching;
as black as the frock Mary took to wear
in those late years (the doors slammed shut, barred, bolted,
the staircase to third-story rooms cut off,
the trays refused, left untouched on the floor—
poison everywhere, everywhere—, the mirrors
shattered, those not shattered covered with muslin,
those not covered with muslin turned to walls
long since stripped of bleak still-lifes, bleaker landscapes,
the windows sealed with bedsheets, afternoons
filled with her silences, nights filled with worse—
dreaming, dreaming, gaunt shadows, visions, hauntings,
visits from those who, bringing the past with them,
are unwelcome—, muttering to herself,
to him, of the frightful burden of evil
in the world, o the weight of it, of darkness
falling, falling, forever falling, of how

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no grief, no mourning, none, proves quite sufficient,
ever, to match the sum of all the losses,
those suffered yesterday and, worse, much worse,
losses yet to be suffered, still to come).
The blackness rises, rises slowly, straight up,
undermining those definitions, rising,
having to do with inadvertence, edges,
borders, peripheries, those preconceptions
we carried here with us, making us question
what part, biographer, is hat, pure hat,
pure real but imagined hat, what part,
rising, rising, immense, blacker than black
(more than one knows what to do with), is Lincoln.

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MARK WILLIAMS

What the Neighbors Don't See

As he sits here, in this rocking chair
that once belonged to his grandmother,
that once belonged to his parents,
that now belongs to him, his arms outstretched
upon the worn cloth of these arms—arm-up,
palm-up—holding him in place,
rocking in a darkness broken
only by the streetlight behind him,
streetlight filtered through interior shutters,
their louvers blocking the incoming light
that casts a cage of black ribs
and spine of louver pull
on the dark, facing wall
as he sits here,

a car turns onto Frederick Street,
approaching, passing, its headlights
glaring peripherally into the room,
the ribs revolving along walls
like they are dancing, alive.

I'll make a mental note, I must
make a journal entry. I must analyze
the dancing.

As the room readjusts, the ribs in place,
he notices the arch from living room to hall
like a gate before a shortened tunnel,
and through the tunnel
an angle of doorframe
and horizontal of empty bed,
his bed, his bedroom
that once belonged to the Taylors,

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that once belonged to *the Lannums*,
the neighbors had said, *a young couple*
with a young boy or was it girl?
He worked, somewhere. His wife,
Beverly was it? was very sick,
wrote short stories and died.

His chair controls the rocking now—
a pulse of its own, a heart
fueling the entire house, alive.
He sees a form upon his bed as if
the young woman, the young writer could rise,
could walk through the doorframe and pass
through the hallway arch.

He watches her, so thin,
her limbs black through a streetlit nightgown.
She smiles as if she has returned
for a consummation. She breathes
to the pulse of his chair and enters
the heart of his mind as a car turns
onto Frederick Street and lifts her
spinning about his living room.

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NANCY CARDOZO

Dead of Winter

for Anna Daria—aged six

Late afternoon we walked
the boundaries, watching
for signs of life in the frozen
woods, fringes of snow between trees
turning black. You went ahead
intent on tracks, crosshatched, split hearts
of hooves—nothing moved
but branches ruffling darkness
falling
over your roughened lips, eyelids
stung by the cold—you found
the kill a hunter left—you ran, arms out,
from giants tilted like jackstraws, the deer
spilling death on the drifts, jaws
wide, ribs, an empty house
in the night to come.
I held
your hand rounding the sunset woods.
You saw its eye, you said, its great red eye—
a burning wound I cannot close
for you. Riding my shoulders homeward
you looked up—vast
antlers hung with brilliants, milky breaths,
our own, circling the distances.

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DEREK MAHON

Night Drive
(after Rilke)

—St. Petersburg, 1900

Not drawn but flown by glistening mares
past silent, tomb-lit porticoes
and lamp-posts hung like chandeliers,
past granite palaces where a first
dawn-glow lightened the roofs, we burst
on to the windy Neva quays
and drummed there in an anxious, thin
half-light neither of earth nor heaven,
leaving behind the unwoken, dark
woods of the Czar's private park
protected from the risen breeze,
its statues fading, every gest-
ure frozen for ever in the past.
St. Petersburg ceased to exist,
disclosed that it had never been;
asked only peace now, as if one
long mad should find the knot untied
and watch, recovered and clear-eyed,
a fixed idea in its Byzantine,
varnished and adamantine shrine
spin off from the whirling mind
and vanish, leaving not a trace behind.

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October

The whitewashed monastery where we sat
listening to the Aegean and watched
a space capsule among the stars
will be closed now for the winter;
and the harbour bars,
cleared of the yacht crowd,
will be serving dawn ouzos to the crews
of the *Aghios Ioannis* and *Nikolaos*
where they play dominoes
by the light of a paraffin lamp.

Europe, after the first rain of winter,
shines with a corpse-light.
A cold wind scours the condemned playground;
leaves swarm like dead souls
down bleak avenues as if they led
to the kingdoms of the dead.
An alcoholic defector
picks out 'Rock of Ages' with one finger
on the grand piano in his Moscow flat.
Some cold fate
awaits us at the ends of the earth.

Like the leaves we are coming within
sight of the final river,
its *son et lumière*
and breath of the night sea;
as if ghosts already,
we search our pockets for the Stygian fare.

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JANE BROX

First Night, Squam

Slam-shut Winter is everywhere.
One man sucks at his teeth
And says a billy-goat couldn't live here.
Others compare this land to the last work
Of a master—charcoal and white chalk
On rose-grey paper.

They imagine it's a place like no other, oriented
As it is, at the edge of a continent.
Cross-currented. Its coniferous trees lean in.
Its woods are full of hurricane lumber.

They wonder, "Why here?
We have a country of pointed firs,
Of grasslands. There's the concentrated
Energies of cities. Remember
Lightning-sparked fire can burn
The slopes of Utah for weeks."

But here, too, is the expansive, native gift.
Elements keep the groundcover low
And bring up a sky you'd only imagine
Across the Plains. Here, every light
Has a world of its own to mind:
A cold and unfazed moon, disinterested stars,
And, glimpsed through tangled branches,
The night lights of a trawler on open water.

If you come down the Squam Road this Winter,
You'll see the hung windows of this house
(Six over six) cast globes of light
And bring up walls that are true enough.

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Squam

In March the color comes from silver lichens
and fluorescent surveyor's flags. I had come
to hunt for arrowheads on the newly cleared land.
It's a place where a saltbox will be
but that winter there were birdpoints of quartz.
I kept my eyes to the ground until a new chill
came off the shoals. I could feel that fog bank
long before it rolled over the island,
and from that bank he seemed to come:

"We made history of what fell into our hands.
When was it you first stopped following?
Our salt cod shacks have become summer homes
and the narrow roads are laden with porcelain berries.
Now you send one faltering trawler to the grounds
and harbor yachts.

But draggers with other home ports
come here, not hauling anything, just straining
toward safety. On course from Georges Bank
you first see the sweep of three lighthouses
and then the lighted spires of churches and lamps
in winter homes. From the whitecapped black water
they seem as bewildering and intricate
as a galaxy. Then this island is loved.
It's not even a place they'd choose to come—
a meal costs too much.

Unless you can come to see
your own lights as stars, you'll be scraping
the surface dirt for relics while salt seeps
into your wells. Then you'll never clear
the brackish tang from your mouth."

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G. E. MURRAY

Mid-Winter Love Lyric

Up through Waterville Notch, gone for raw hours
On speechless white plain
Of ice-cloud, anchored in snow; through basin
And pass and glimmer, backward
Into a crosshatched weave of shore's insignia,
Where the early pitch of darkness easily fills
Our tracks, ways of digging in.
Still we surely know silhouette
From our yearly unlearning, high ground
From echo. At this range the benevolent sight
Of a steeplejack watching us
Localizes spectre, idiom and feature,
Has all the wrong makings
For a good, gray government sky
Hovering in witness of serious, musical surfaces.

So much for the earth's clean muscle,
And the first afternoon of a season
That sours in the black corners of a squall.
This is the only welcome we entertain:
Shortcomings of path, tongues warming
To a pause for brittle conversation,
Star talk. We break off what we can
And call it rescue,
Call it our deadly shivers. Beginning *now*.

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MAUREEN MULLARKEY

The Figure and How It Fared

THE HUMAN FIGURE, AS A VIABLE SUBJECT FOR ART, has been taking it on the chin since the Armory Show of 1913. By the 1950s the fundamental concepts of figuration were under heavy fire from every direction. Even now, after two decades of counter-battery rhetoric, the figure is still on the defensive. Dore Ashton's comment is as true today as it was in 1963: "If there is one central conflict common to painters, it exists in the thousands of years of figure painting and sixty years of abstraction. The truth is that no one is fully at ease." Figure painters themselves secretly fret that maybe the figure isn't as *creative* as abstraction after all. Excuses are made for it, platforms built and gimmicks supplied. As a result, the figure remains an encumbrance to many of its own practitioners, an awkward guest to be hastily introduced, handed a drink and steered past the fast crowd on the dance floor.

The human figure, depicted for its own sake, possessed of its own worth and with all its parts in place, is certainly not extinct. But it *is* threatened by propagandists, party hacks and assorted commissars with higher priorities than the merely human. On the evidence of the previous gallery season, the quest for Importance After Modernism is a greater prod to ambition than mortal blood and bone. The season opened with Wayne Thiebaud's retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. It came full circle and closed with the Whitney retrospective of Alex Katz, Thiebaud's fellow-traveler in Pop. Between these two events, the midways of promotion were jammed with noisy figures that were more the subject of oratory than of art. Only a few rare sensibilities ignored the clamor to stand in silent witness to a quiet truth: in the hands of a rightful love, the figure is forever new, responsive and full of grace.

Wayne Thiebaud is a good starting place for examining the predicament of a talented painter face-to-face with the figure. Thiebaud is the impresario of pies, ice cream cones and gumball machines. His images of mass-produced foodstuffs combine the dexterity and thematic perserverance of Morandi with the exuberance of Red Grooms. The still lives are a visual feast, spread as if in celebration of William Morris Hunt's dictum: "Draw firm! and be jolly!" His cityscapes—giddy freeways and vertiginous streets viewed through a telephoto lens—rank him among the best of the Bay Area painters and one of the liveliest landscapists anywhere.

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Then why does the feast go stale in the figure paintings? Thiebaud is an instinctive draughtsman, capable of a linear delicacy, precision and sensitivity to nuance that does credit to his professed admiration for Ingres. His drawings give evidence of genuine sympathy for and knowledge of the figure. He himself sees the ability to handle the figure as the essential measure of a painter's capacities: "I think it is the *most* important study there is and the most challenging and the most difficult." But something gives out in the paintings. His figures are solidly rendered, workmanlike but curiously vulgar. The subtleties are gone, the color awry. A boxed rose carries more conviction than a nude in a tub. Thiebaud endows totems of mediocrity with charm and energy, making plain why these things are popular in real life. Yet his figure paintings level an inherently significant subject to the banality of a club sandwich.

Thiebaud's reliance on caricature as a means to simplification and abstraction skirts mockery when it is applied to the figure. His coloristic mannerisms—orange outlines, acid green reflected lights, shadows of pure cobalt—have become an inhibition. They are a patented eccentricity that takes precedence over the figure itself. The neon vibrato satirizes the subject, transforming flesh into cheese spread, when no burlesque is intended.

Only in the drawings does Thiebaud surrender his trademark and reveal a versatility that belies his own disclaimer: "I'm just a sign painter gone uppity." Brush in hand, he refuses to jeopardize the pose by permitting the figure to dictate its own terms, furnish its own solutions. He won't risk the Pop identity even though he took up the figure in discomfort with the Pop label. After all, some pigeonholes are roomier than others. A Pop artist earns a piece of art history; figure painters chance winding up with quotation marks around them. Thiebaud's figures represent a victory of style, of a recognizable art market formula, over aptitude. It's our loss.

Nothing is lost in the work of Alex Katz because there is so little to start with. Katz is the high priest of absence. If his Brobdingnagian absentees stood up to declare their nonattendance, there would be more to grapple with. As it is, they merely fail to be present. This is a bland, decaffeinated art free of any additive but size. (*Eleuthera*, four panels of bathers in shower-curtain colors, is 10 × 22 feet. *Pas de Deux*, five panels of vapid couples on a black field, is 11 × 32 feet.) Glimpsed in passing at 60 m.p.h. on the Brooklyn Queens Exressway, these would be eye-catching and sufficiently pleasant. There is just not enough to hold you in place. Your feet begin to work as if releasing the clutch and pressing the accelerator. Before you know it, you are out of the Whitney and into Books & Co. looking for a copy of Henderson and Landau's 1980 text *Billboard Art*.

Katz's debt to the billboard advertising of the fifties, known in the trade as "The Golden Age of Painting," has long been noted. His

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specific debt to Otis Shephard, laureate of Wrigley's gum, deserves more attention than it gets. Shephard originated, without benefit of briefing by Harold Rosenberg on the creed of Flatness, those totally level cropped heads that became Katz's signature. What is the difference between upper-case Art and lower-case advertising? The Surgeon General's warning in one corner.

Although the exhibition catalog cheerily credits Katz with having reconciled the figure with the canons of abstraction, Katz is not interested in the figure. He toys with it, like a bored colonel in some Crown colony teasing the natives. His real interest is scale. The one surprise in this retrospective was the series of meticulous collages from the fifties. In these tiny cutouts, some no more than 4 × 6 inches, Katz explored scale as a matter of internal relationships, not of dimension. Accordingly, these small works have a poise and an authenticity the larger ones lack. Monumentality derives from qualities of mind for which bulk is no substitute. (This was the lesson of the modest exhibition of elegant heads and fluid bronze figures by sculptor Elie Nadelman at the Edward Thorp Gallery last spring.) As Frédéric Bartholdi said of his Liberty, the colossal "should touch the spectator's feelings, not by reason of its sheer size, but because its size is right for the idea that prompted it." The larger Katz's preposterous figures grow, the more vacant the underlying concept seems.

Industrial scale is one stand-in for confidence in the figure. The other is Thinking Big. In growing numbers, painters are turning to political references, often with the assumption that a moral position that is beyond criticism will stand bail for unresolved formal issues and aesthetic shortcomings. In this climate, the figure—whose demands on any artist are extreme—is made expendable to a partisan stance. So long as the posture is politically correct (left-leaning), we are expected to beam upon the expenditure as a sign of sincerity. The artist is excused from liability for his *art* because the meaning of the work is not located on the canvas. It lies in the acceptability of the artist's *intentions*, whether or not these have been successfully translated into pictorial ideas.

Leon Golub, showing at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery, typifies the current fashion for political imagery. His vicious torturers and battered victims come by the acre. Unpersuasive derivations of the illustrational style of Ben Shahn—without Shahn's pictographic and calligraphic deftness—the figures are shapeless, weightless, lacking any identity other than a hazy generic one. Golub disregards the compositional devices needed to give his figures distinct political, rather than sentimental, definition. Flat bodies float in empty space, identifiable mainly by their costumes. The heavies wear fatigues and sunglasses and carry guns. These are visual clichés, vague and equivocal. They tell us nothing about what Golub specifically stands for, apart from a generalized disaffection. Whose goons are these?

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The PLO's, for instance, or the Israelis'? The contras' or the Sandinistas'? What attitude is to be taken toward the acts of the IRA? the Ulster Defense Force? Are Golub's sadistic men intrinsically depraved or themselves the victims of some larger malignancy? Is violence itself the demon or can moral distinctions be made between atrocities? Where do we place our pity and our censure?

Blasé about the requirements for image-making, Golub is content with pulpy figures that are readable as slogans. Down with oppression! This is not plausible political painting. It is a rhetorical device designed to bully us into believing that an art work is significant because of the significance of its real life referent. Without the imaginative passion and formal rigor from which convincing art emerges, these works remain ideological titillations that do not enhance our engagement with social realities. They simply take advantage of prevailing sympathies.

The starlets of the season were David Salle and Eric Fishl. This was predictable in an art market that permits definitions of quality to be dictated by dealers themselves. It's dealer's choice and the art press plays the hand it is dealt. The hoopla over Salle and Fishl, packaged and sold by Leo Castelli and Mary Boone, validates Castelli's boast: "Mary and I, we can make an artist charismatic." Boone, commenting in *Life*, echoed Castelli: "Not enough can be said of the importance of developing an entire image for the artists I represent."

S and F are advertised as Bad Boys. This keeps the customers coming because everyone loves a Bad Boy. No one is more susceptible than well-behaved grown-ups who still wish they had refused their spinach when they had the chance. In real life, the infatuation comes to its natural end when the Bad Boy makes off with your wallet. In art, there is no such brake on romance. Art encourages the swindle to go as far as your tolerance for humiliation allows. That is often a great distance. Fanning the insult are all those jabberwocks of art babble ready to burble "Genius! Prophet!" every time a painting pulls its knickers down in front of guests.

No one dares to snigger. So the figure is left with its hands in its pants on the wobbly assumption that that's where *our* hands are too. Art, ipso facto, must mirror life.

The Bad Boy was saleable well before Jackson Pollock walked naked into Peggy Guggenheim's living room, urinated in the fireplace and got away with it. Paul Valéry put it succintly in 1935: "We have developed a curious habit of supposing that any artist who fails to begin by shocking . . . must be third rate. If he fails to stagger us or raise our eyebrows, he is nonexistent. Whence the necessity of shocking becomes a sacred task." For Salle and Fishl the figure has no validity of its own. It's the carpet that leads to Peggy Guggenheim's fireplace.

Salle shares with medieval religious artists a highly restricted ico-

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nography and the imperative to present certain material. Miracles or sexual cues, no matter. What counts is the compulsory nature of the program. The repetitious filling out of a monotonous formula is practiced with as much unconcern by the pornographer as by the hagiographer. Salle's compositionally inert diptychs are little more than stills from a blue movie. Female crotches are mechanically transferred to canvas and crudely painted over in a lurid cat-house light. In *His Brain*—typical fare—a nude female bends over, ass to the spectator, and passes a houseboat. The Meese Commission was formed to regulate this sort of thing. But on the wall of the Castelli Gallery, listless kiddie porn is transformed, by sleight-of-mind, into radical post-modern representation. This is ART. Just to prove it (dealers don't take chances), the beaver shots are overlaid with a meretricious tangle of what-nots. Body parts are superimposed arbitrarily on horseshoes, gravy bowls, phallic motifs, reproductions of Old Master works. These, in turn, are intruded upon by slices of wallpaper design, cartoons and various unsmiling orifices. All in dreary conformity to the trendy notion that groundbreaking art aspires to unintelligibility.

Large adult doses of the erotic and the scatological can be held in solution without settling into pornography. It is not the sexual content itself that leaves us skeptical of Salle's *bona fides*. It is his cynical indifference to the figure and boredom with the sexuality it suggests. Salle trades on the suspicion that the figure is an exhausted convention that can only outwit its own obituary by submitting to debasement. Blank sexual references, void of sexual presence, are served up on a slab. His female nudes are insentient, emptied of substance and of sensuality. Reduced to postures, sexuality is bereft of eroticism and deprived even of its status as biological fact. It's all too hip, too coy, too laboriously manufactured to be taken seriously as anything but an art marketeer's wet dream.

For Fishl, as for Salle, the figure is a tool for scratching the real agenda on the wall: giving the raspberry to the bourgeosie. Instead of greeting the program with Wodehousian nonchalance, guilty prudes that we are, we respond to the abuse. *Mea culpa*! Aren't we shabby! Fishl knows the game and caters to the clientele like the savvy proprietor of a *maison de tolérance*. Fishl's peep show is Thinking Big with a prurient fillip: the narcissistic personality of our time, sexually frustrated and writhing in the depths, is poised on the brink of perversion. Over it, even.

Fishl's work is as full of stock devices as a folk tale. His Whitney show read like a collection of fairy tales compiled for an era of sexual panic and preoccupation. The enchantment of the long ago and faraway is translated into the Never-Neverland of a mythical middle class whose pleasure principles are stuck, like the sword of Merlin, in the stone of their Club Med compensations. The poolside barbecue pit, the condo in Anaheim, the bidet—these are the mires and

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marshes of the Perilous Realm occupied by Fishl's folk. Sex is the Foul Potion. Perversity is the Wicked Stepmother, the troll lurking under the king-sized bed. (What Portnoy achieved with the family dinner, the folk of Fishl's Fäerie accomplish—it is broadly suggested—with the family dog.) In serious fairy tales, however, as in life, there is that moment of insight, of satisfaction, redemption or release. Fishl's characters just keep on masturbating.

These are not the deliberate, exquisitely worked distortions of Max Beckmann, to whom Fishl is glibly compared. One of the giants of twentieth-century painting and the prime meridian from which is reckoned the quality of subsequent expressionist work, Beckmann grounded his freedom as an artist in reverence for form. He urged his students: "Learn the forms of nature by heart, so that you can use them like the musical notes of a composition. . . . The will for Form carries in itself part of the salvation for which you are seeking." Fishl's slapdash figures result from a fashionable contempt, masquerading as social commentary, that is used to provide exemption from the claims of craft.

Complexity of mind and the weight of a moral vision do not necessarily reside in grandiose or novel subject matter. William Beckman, Gregory Gillespie and the Spanish painter Antonio Lopez Garcia lend meaning to the term "realism" on a plane that has nothing to do with stylistic classification. The three move easily between the inherited categories of figure, landscape and still life. Each brings to his subject a ferocity of observation, a degree of inquiry—of knowledge, patience and judgement—that is the essence of an artistic conscience.

The initial labor of creation is inner. It entails evolving scruples and desires in relation to one's own gifts. These painters have set their own standards, maintaining habits of mind and a manner of working that is well outside the norm. They are each committed to that slow, disinterested communion with a chosen subject, without regard to the dispensations of market trends, that is an artist's decisive evidence (as an *artist*) of moral conviction. The figure, in their hands, is a revelation that testifies in defense of the humane. And, consequently, to any remnant of the divine that might still be salvaged from its likeness.

Beckman, exhibiting at the Frumkin Gallery, is the most secular of the three. He is a great lens, a relentless eye that confronts its object in defiance of the camera. In the gravity and intelligence of his figures he has staked out a turf on which he is rarely challenged. Beckman has been recasting the same two figures, himself and his wife Diana, since 1968. The subjects never change—only the angles from which they are portrayed, the gestures they are permitted, the space they are given to inhabit, the intensity of coloration. These are the subtleties from which emerge the expressive content of these deceptively truthful portraits.

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His April show contained Beckman's latest self-portrait: a half-figure presented against an artfully neutral background, in the tradition of full-face portraiture common in the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century as court painting. The subject, in shirt-sleeves and jeans, hands tucked suggestively under the belt, is fully contemporary. The spirit, and the flawless technique in which it is crystallized, is Northern Renaissance. The unyielding tenacity of concentration descends from Dürer. The obstinacy of the gaze—imperious and in command of the dialogue between subject and viewer—recalls Holbein's hieratic portrait of Henry VIII. This is not a genial image.

Amiability could hardly survive the intimacy, sometimes tender, often menacing, that prompts these encounters between painter and sitter. Beckman's unidealized, barely polite appraisals of his wife (who appears, at times, equally frank in her estimation of the spectator) depict a wakeful sensibility impatient with the evasions of kindliness. His portraits and figure compositions explore the intricacies that exist between men and women, that strangeness before the Other that resolves itself not in desire but in understanding. What makes Beckman exceptional is the elusive, indefinable capacity to infuse his figures with that germ of otherness that comes, as Octavio Paz has said, "as an unforeseen gift, a sign that life makes to life."

Despite a retrospective at the Hirshhorn in 1977, Gregory Gillespie remains better known among painters than by the public,. His work is not ingratiating. Stunningly crafted, it is severe, abstruse, haunted and full of visual gymnastics. His March exhibition at the Forum Gallery, where he has been showing for twenty years, was aptly called "The Real and the Imagined." His pieces are a cunning blend of both, obscuring the boundary between what is seen and what comes afterward in dreams. Dazzling displays of the "real" attend a penitential imagination that has its counterpart in the brooding, traumatic visions of Bosch, Brueghel and Grünewald. In an era grown shy of mystery, Gillespie is an anomaly. He has the temperament of a Desert Father and the surrealist's gift for portraying the world with its entrails out. Precisely painted subjects function as signs whose meaning reveals itself by divination. Reality is explored from its underbelly.

For Gillespie, the human figure is not the *lingua universalis* of traditional representation. It is a highly specific personal symbol of a disquieting presence incarnate in corporeal fact. The figure, however accurately rendered, is never straightforward. Its precision and limpidity are hedged with uneasiness, lending it a strange sense of distortion. The body is penetrable by art, fit to do it service, but Gillespie is not quite comfortable with flesh. There is a certain prudery to his figures. This is mortified flesh, carnal paraphernalia analogous to studio clutter. His most recent figures give no hint of

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the desires and disturbances consequent upon a sexual being. The sting of the flesh is in mortality alone. The body is an ephemeral affair, a frail cluster of cells destined for dispersion.

A nude sits in a dark, derelict corner. The tinge of decay is everywhere—across the surface of the walls, the floor, in the sad, sepia light—muting the difference between the living organism and the inert space around it. An elderly woman is a wreck of flesh, the "body of death," in the words of St. Paul, already in anxious contact with its End. In a self-portrait, Gillespie's own crestfallen body seems almost to sit beside him at the easel, entirely subdued, a dull retainer quickened only for the labors of art. These are interior landscapes, full of innuendo, that provide parallel images to Gillespie's "real" landscapes: wild, undulating places far from the garden primeval; lapsed and disordered regions that bear the seeds of their own ruin.

Antonio Lopez Garcia comes to the figure, as to every organic form, with infinite tenderness. Recognized in Europe and revered as a master among younger painters in his native Spain, Lopez Garcia is barely known here. Consequently, his spring show at the Marlborough, together with his inclusion in "Seven Spanish Realists" at the Claude Bernard, was a milestone. Lopez Garcia works with remarkable patience, exerting a discipline over his hand, his eye and his materials that elevates him above any contemporary art scene. The work is accomplished by slow accretion, like the formation of a coral reef. One landscape of Madrid took twenty years to complete, another eight. Five years were spent on one drawing, eighteen on a life-sized polychromed wood sculpture of a male figure that is still not finished. These exaltations of austerity yield glorious drawings and some of the most magnificent paintings currently produced in or out of the realist camp.

The work is classical, not in its subjects or handling of forms, but in its sanity and reticence. There is no bravura here. It is conservative both in its method and in the vision that sustains it: love for the shape, character and color of things. Its discretion is rooted in humility, in Lopez Garcia's own self-effacement before the irreducible worth of the concrete. Nothing is in vain; nothing is beneath his notice. By his refusal to accept easy solutions to the problems of art, he exalts the subjects he treats—an industrial site, a kitchen corner, a flowering almond tree, a man *in extremis*. His work is an act of faith, a mortal leap into an affirmation of man and the world. This gracious, contemplative "yes" arises from profound compassion for the vulnerability and temporality man shares with the rest of matter.

The surface of a carving of an infant in its carrier has been worked and scraped until it resembles an excavated sarcophagus. A translucent painting of a skinned rabbit curled on a plate—wet, glistening and flecked with blood like a fetus—creates a shiver of rec-

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Antonio Lopez Garcia
MARIA (1972)
Pencil drawing

Courtesy, Marlborough Gallery

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ognition. Images of birth and death meet and greet each other with perfect courtesy, formal gestures of salutation to mortality. The bittersweet aura of evanescence is most powerful in his drawings, true marriages of intention and technique. Loose graphite is caressed onto gessoed paper with a sable brush, the darks accumulating imperceptively under the weight of the grains. Delicate pencil lines appear and dissolve, through repeated erasures, like the contours of life itself. The image thus generated swells and contracts, a living pulse keeping its own pace in the moment that we glimpse it. This is man and his earth. And that is tragedy enough.

After the close of World War II, the French scholar Jean Mouroux observed: "What is at stake in our civilization is whether man shall remain—or re-become—a sacred thing." To call a thing sacred, as Mouroux understood, is to adopt a religious attitude toward it. There are moments in Lopez Garcia's work when the creative act becomes a religious encounter. Humanity is restored to its dignity through a divinizing instinct that reveals man to himself: *res sacra, homo.*

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Coming onto the City

EVERY SUMMER WHEN DANCE FOLK FLEE NEW YORK for calmer scenes, Dance Theater Workshop counters the doldrums for those who must remain with a series of performances by visiting companies. The Out-of-Towners series, in its ninth year, presents dancers new to the New York audience, and gives them the necessary cachet at home that a New York credit confers. The series has also contributed to the creation of a national network of alternative presenting spaces and available non-mainstream companies, spearheaded by DTW director David R. White. It's probably too much to hope that this process would reveal scads of untapped, regional dance styles, since the media have reduced most of American culture to standard-size nuggets.

What regionalism does allow is for further examination and individual reformulation of perfectly good ideas that have been initiated, used, and discarded by New York's speeded-up dancemakers. Most of the five companies this year had a lot in common with contemporary downtown dancers in New York, especially their sense of theatricality, with production elements ranging from glitzy sets and costumes to talking, singing, acrobatics, anything to pep up the involvement of audiences presumably immune to the charms of dancing alone. There was sexuality in all kinds of extreme forms—cross-dressing, androgyny, porn, sadism, and behaviors I don't have a name for. There was a pervasive involvement with *things*—in fact, in four of the performances, there seemed to be more relating to objects than to people.

The single exception to this merchandising of the pop culture apparatus, Wil Swanson from Minneapolis, seemed like a throwback. Even as I was enjoying his concentration on movement and on the process of composing with movement, I was thinking how much his dance reminded me of some of the best work in the sixties and seventies. And that inevitably led to an amazed recognition of how much things have changed. What Swanson does, what we continue to call postmodern dance, hasn't been done as a new thing in these parts for many a year.

Swanson and his six dancers move in fast, clear, centered swoops and spins, with an emphasis on varying speeds and a generous amount of stillness. He can make movement, mostly involving the feet and locomotion patterns, but he's economical with his invention. This to me marks a real choreographer—Swanson doesn't

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keep making up new stuff all the time but uses what he's got. He'll lay out the same phrase in different parts of the space, in counterpoint, in different rhythms. The dancers work sometimes individually, sometimes in tandem with each other. They don't bother too much about dancing to the music that's playing in the background, but they do attend to each other's impulses, letting their own movement be triggered off by someone else's. They seem fairly impassive, even impersonal, in comparison to the animated, often exaggerated face-making, eye-rolling behavior of other dancers today. They don't seem to be as interested in placement or *where* they're traveling in space as they are in how the movement feels on their bodies. They're sensual dancers, and what their interaction lacks in specificity it makes up in awareness.

While Swanson's formalism can be a bit antiseptic, it can also be revealing, even satisfying. It's his restraint rather than any dramatizing that lets you see into the human situation in the most interesting of his four pieces, *On Nights Like These*. Swanson and Stephen Rueff begin by mirroring each other's movements. As a voice on tape softly repeats suggestive words like "gaze," "skin," "tilt," "the tilt of the gaze," the men ease into a call-and-response pattern, tentatively touching each other. The dance becomes almost narrative. It's a seduction of some kind. Or several kinds. Body surfaces come in contact. One man leans on the other. They lift each other, carry each other, almost inadvertently. They withdraw from the touch, even recoil, pull back, pause, then return. The duet never becomes passionate, but the interaction is full of change and tenderness. After a long time, a flute and cello play some blues (music by Yusef Lateef), and the men lie down together, spoon fashion.

Of all this year's Out-of-Towners, Swanson had the clearest idea of how to structure a dance, and the clearest sense of a personal movement idiom belonging to dance alone. Steve Krieckhaus from Philadelphia has an astonishing range of movement options, none of them particularly indebted to dance technique: the gestural specificity of a mime, the agility and skill of an acrobat, the supple resilience of a Contact Improviser, and the robotlike disconnectability of a break dancer. At an instant's notice he can make his physical self totally usable in any of these modes, or, with the smoothness of an actor in a TV commercial, he can become the intense young corporate man. Krieckhaus' solo concert of seven short pieces was as fascinating as a tour of some intricate and possibly sinister piece of machinery.

In his opener, *This Time (time before the time after the time before)*, he sits at a wooden table, pulls four sheets of paper out of a drawer, thinks, writes a number in the corner of each. He seems to be working on a problem, calculating something, in a hurry, but also anxious to get it right. He stretches, leans over, falls off the chair without changing either his expression or his brusque manner. He

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walks over to where a mattress is placed on the floor, throws himself on it without warning, then immediately begins crawling around in circles on it. Staying involved with the props, his bizarre behavior escalates. He snatches a sheet of paper from the table, starts walking purposefully upstage, falls on the floor, flips onto his side clutching the paper, which he reads, by turning his head very fast from side to side, suddenly stuffs the paper in his pocket, springs up again.

In *Book* he half-juggles, half-plays with a volume the size of the Britannica, making it balance on odd parts of his body or slide up and down his arm. He twirls it like a baton. He slaps it on the floor. Fleetingly, in between these tricks, he treats it like a book, opening it, flipping through the pages, tucking it under his arm. The book's real uses are as disfunctional as its fantastic ones. Krieckhaus can manipulate his body in the same mechanistic way, one move after another. He gives the impression of deliberating before every move, but the result is never predictable.

His creepiest achievement, *In the Dark*, is to turn himself into a redneck psychopath. First he talks softly to the audience in the dark: "I like the dark. Everything is closer in the dark." As the lights come up, we discover twenty-six pairs of plastic feet severed from show-window dummies. Krieckhaus strolls around, occasionally squatting down over a pair of feet to tell the audience chattily about the people he wasted in the motel in Nevada. He goes up to a bed piled with stuff, takes a black balloon and a butcher knife, stabs the balloon, comes back to the audience with red stains on his hands and his clothes. This matter-of-fact orgy finally ends with him yelling "WHY DON'T SOMEBODY STOP ME??" as the lights go out. Krieckhaus is supposed to be a comic, but his persistent subversion of the literal speaks of a universe where nothing is dependable, nothing can be taken for what it seems to suggest. This is no joke.

Daniel Ezralow, a Paul Taylor alumnus who now lives in Washington, Connecticut, where he dances with Momix, also engages in eclecitc physicality and bizarre surprises. But I found his concert unfocussed. Ezralow has a wild, raunchy humor and an elastic body; his performing is supercharged and riveting to watch. He doesn't, however, seem to have any ideas about choreography. His six dances ranged from images out of old modern dance to slide shows to slick Broadway duets.

Ezralow's most ambitious pieces have "themes," but not much coherence between episodes. It's like deciding to write a book that will have a refrigerator in every chapter. *Dogfish* starts out with a giant piece of silk that first hangs over the space like a tent, later is pulled down and manipulated in billows on the floor. This device is straight out of Doris Humphrey's 1920 *Soaring*, and after the dancers do some sensuous wallowing in the silken deeps, they borrow

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from another Humphrey dance, *Water Study* of 1928, for a sequence of curling and uncurling movements done in profile to the audience and gradually evolving into backward-arching jumps. The movement progresses into handstand-falls and later into duets with one partner "swimming" on the back of the other. In other sections of the dance, nets are thrown over the dancers and they're "caught"; later, amid smoke and glaring lights they rise from the floor and "dive" into the dancing space, with accompanying sound effects.

Although not all Ezralow's dancers are equally facile, his movement style combines Pilobolitic kinkiness with an extroverted athleticism. In *Hoover Hallucinations* he displays his whole zany, outrageous bag of tricks. A woman lounges on a stool upstage, wearing a black slip, high heels, long hair. We never get to see her face, but she isn't an individual so much as an idea, a Sexy Woman. Suddenly, with a great commotion, Ezralow enters, rolled up in an Oriental rug. Undoing himself from it, he begins an extraordinary dance of wild falls, flips, slides and manic two-footed jumps. He keeps eyeing the woman, getting more excited, but never goes near her. Instead, he zaps his sexual energy right at the audience. The audience adores it.

Less satisfying from a movement point of view was *SVSPLKT*, which began with all the dancers lurching around like winos—probably only an ex-New Yorker could find this idea amusing nowadays. Another scene: the dancers coyly undress behind louvered blinds. Another scene: in loincloths, they do a formal posturing dance vaguely Javanese in style—angular shapes and pseudo-gamelan music. Somehow all this mock urbanity and exotica comes together in the end, with everyone turning into a spastic.

Ezralow's talent for the grotesque is unusual because he flaunts it. But I noticed that all the Out-of-Towners were using a kind of confrontational style, with the exception of Swanson, who still maintains the convention that what is going on in the dancing-space is a separate world to be looked at by the audience. The others perform more like singers or night-club artists, addressing themselves directly to the audience. In the case of both women on the series, this seemed to encourage confessional monologues and elaborations on them.

I thought Helen Dannenberg, of San Francisco, an amateur. At least, she gives that impression. A small plain woman, she talks to the audience in *Album* about her Jewish family, what her mother put in the potato pancakes or how a school chum was bigger than she was, for instance. Dannenberg doesn't indicate, either in the pacing and shape of each story or in the way she delivers it, why she thinks it's worth telling. Deborah Slater, Karen Attix and Ellen Bromberg, dressed in forties dresses, wander through now and then. In *My Reindeer Flies Sideways* Dannenberg tells anecdotes about

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her dancing lessons and her dance teaching. Or is it *Solo with Figures* where she does that?

One reason why it's hard to remember one from another of the six pieces is that Dannenberg uses a dance-and-gesture-and-attitude language in which each move says something but the moves don't add up. In *The Dress* Attix slinks on in a stunning pink one-shoulder gown. After showing it to the audience, she lies down on a fur coat on the floor and sticks her legs straight up in the air. Slater and Bromberg, dressed in cocktail dresses, make party moves, gesture archly. Castanets are heard on tape. Dannenberg comes in wearing too-big tails and a too-small top hat. She and Attix dance a tepid tango. Dannenberg's vocabulary is packed with the baggage of feminism, but I have no idea where she's trying to take it.

Dannenberg isn't the only dancer nowadays using movements as signals. Deborah Andersen of Columbus, Ohio, also ranges around through the annals of body language, choosing message-bearing moves with non-movement connections between them. Andersen's meaning, at least, was quite clear. Her concert was about not dancing. She tells us she's been considered too small for a dancer, too old, has too big a head, in *The Mole and the Aviator*, a dialogue with her alter ego. She gets horrible pre-performance jitters *Waiting* and, once the show begins reveals herself to be a failed ballerina who cheats by getting only part-way up on pointe in the hard places. She's upstaged by a drum major and a piccolo player from a circus band in *Beauty Knows No Pain*. When she does dance, she uses a few basic enchaînements in all the pieces and disregards whatever music is playing. Sometimes she seems to be deliberately throwing the steps away.

When she's most persistent about the dancing, in *Honest Don't You*, she gets an unsuitable partner, John Giffin, who at first seems not to be a dancer at all. Later he turns out to do very neat vernacular and jazz dancing, and somehow they accommodate to each other sweetly. Andersen has an interesting theatrical imagination, and her concert moved from piece to piece with offbeat interludes like historic silent films of rubberlegs dancers, a knobby-kneed little ballerina, and can-can girls; and a menagerie of toy animals set in mechanical motion by a poker-faced Scott Brandon, who didn't blanch when his charges began sniffing and humping each other.

The big piece on the program, *If the Vernal Sun Burns Strong Enough*, begins like a Japanese ceremony of some kind, with Andersen, Brandon and Giffin entering solemnly in long flowing robes and seating themselves formally on different sides of the space. Facing the center, they deliver epigrams and advice that might have come from a book of proverbs: "When a woman lives alone her house should be extremely dilapidated." Though the lines don't make a whole lot of sense, the performers become quite dramatic; one man is very argumentative, the other might want to make

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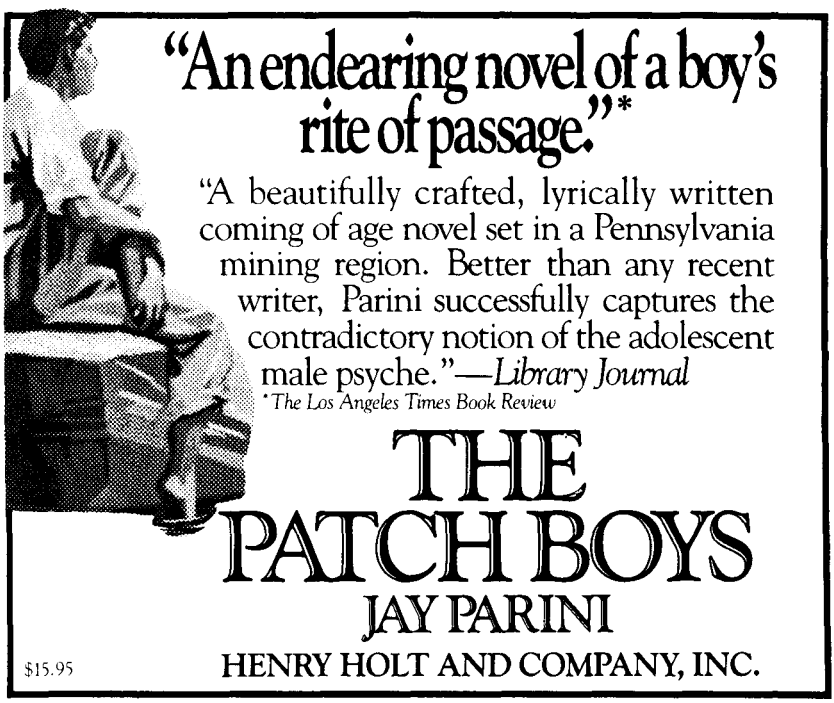
peace. Andersen seems schoolmarmish. She has duets with each of the men, and the two of them do a long contact improvisation duet together. Eventually all three merge into a single embrace. Like Japanese Noh theater, this piece is very drawn-out, with extended ritualistic expositions leading to relatively unspectacular denouements—only in English it all seems unbearably long.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RICHARD HORNBY

The London Theatre, Summer 1986

THE LONDON THEATRE SEASON THIS PAST YEAR was relatively thin. Fear of terrorism, and, more important, the drastic fall of the dollar reduced the usual number of American tourists in England between 30 and 70 percent (such a wide range of estimates suggests that the statistics are not gathered very carefully!), and since Americans normally make up a quarter of London theatre-goers in the summertime, many shows ended their runs early, some even closing out of town because audience prospects looked so bleak.

A number of commercial producers, greedily anticipating the usual influx, had prepared productions specifically aimed at U.S. tourists, with name-brand stars in flimsy plays with obvious American orientation: thus, Glenda Jackson starred in Charles Wood's *Across from the Garden of Allah*, a plotless, lifeless *tranche de vie* about a British writer and his wife in Hollywood. (I like Glenda Jackson's acting so much that I always used to say, jokingly, that I'd pay money to watch her eat her breakfast; this time, I felt that I had.) Roger Rees, known to Americans from *Nicholas Nickleby*, starred in his own *Double, Double*, a thriller with more implausibilities than Richard Nixon's Watergate alibi. Albert Finney starred in an actual American production, Lyle Kessler's crude piece *Orphans*, with the overrated Steppenwolf Theatre Company from Chicago; Finney's American co-actors, perhaps taking Artaud's "affective athleticism" too literally, seemed to think that acting consists of imitating Mexican jumping beans, flinging themselves randomly about the stage. Finally, Paul Scofield starred in Herb Gardner's paltry *I'm Not Rappaport*, concurrently running in New York, where, to our shame, it won the Tony Award for best play. It was sad to see these fine actors in such trash; nevertheless, one could take perverse pleasure in the largely empty houses. It's nice to know that crassness in the theatre occasionally gets punished.

For all of this, there were still plenty of good productions to see. The London theatre today, even in an off year, offers far more than the New York theatre. There were, for example, satisfying productions in the West End (the equivalent of our Broadway) of competent new plays like Ronald Harwood's *Interpreters*, with Maggie Smith and Edward Fox performing splendidly as a British interpreter of Russian who has an affair with her Russian counterpart; Richard Harris' comedy *Stepping Out*, a simple and honest depiction of an evening tap-dance class of assorted women and one

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man; and Ken Ludwig's maniacal farce *Lend Me a Tenor*, a combination of Wedekind's *The Tenor* and the Marx Brothers' *Room Service*. None of these is a great play, but all are refreshingly skillful, and were well performed.

Similarly, there were a number of enjoyable productions of standard British plays, such as J. B. Priestley's *When We Are Married*, Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*, and John Osborne's *The Entertainer*. The British lack our self-consciousness about such plays; they are usually content with straightforward revivals with solid actors (the biggest star name in any of the three above was Peter Bowles, seen in the U.S. in a few imported television series) rather than the bizarre "updatings" that U.S. producers and directors often require. The result is that there is a norm of competence in the British theatre that our theatre lacks, an implicit standard playwriting and performance that operates as a challenge to playwrights and directors to match, supersede, or alter. It has become common since the Romantic era to deride mere competence in the arts, but when it is lacking, the consequence is the ghastly loss of energy seen in the American theatre today, with its aimless, restless avant-garde having no real norms to attack, trying hopelessly to titillate a bored and declining audience.

An interesting pair of productions in this category of standard plays competently performed were Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, starring Vanessa Redgrave and Timothy Dalton, in repertory at the Haymarket. These were, again, commercial productions, yet were in fact the best Shakespeare in London at the time, the Royal Shakespeare Company (about which more shortly) having fallen on hard times. *The Taming of the Shrew* has become one of the most challenging and interesting plays in the canon for directors and actors. There are intriguing psychological depths in Petruchio and Kate that make the play seem very modern; the scene in which he forces her to call the sun the moon, for example, not only has bizarre sadomasochistic undertones, but also seems very contemporary in the way it raises questions about the nature of truth and illusion. In the same vein, the play-within-the-play framing device, and the incessant examples of role playing within both the inner and the outer play, foreshadow Pirandello. But on the other hand, *Shrew* presents two severe difficulties in modern production: First, the framing play, in which Christopher Sly, a drunken tinker, is made to think that he is a nobleman just recovered from a fifteen-year bout of insanity, and then allowed to watch the performance of the Kate-Petruchio/Bianca-Lucentio story that turns out to be the play proper, is marvelously vigorous and funny, but incomplete in the folio, our only extant text. Sly makes comments twice during the early scenes of the inner play, which implies that he will watch throughout, but there is no further textual reference to him after I.ii. Second, and far more difficult these days, Kate's "obedience" speech at the end seems so bluntly

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antifeminist as to be offensive. Bernard Shaw, despite finding the rest of the play remarkably fresh and realistic, maintained that "no man with any decency of feeling can sit it out in the company of a woman without being extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied . . . in the speech put into the woman's own mouth." The former problem has led to various solutions over the years, from simply cutting out the Sly material at one extreme, to completely rewriting with additions at the other. This production took a middle ground, ignoring Sly after I.ii, then giving him some lines at the very end in which he said he would go home and treat his wife properly henceforth; this is as reasonable a solution as any, and also helps in a mild way with the antifeminist problem, but it was vitiated by the insipid performance of Taylor McAuley as Sly. The part offers marvelous opportunities for comic invention, but McAuley merely plodded through the role, so that the Sly episodes carried little dramatic weight; the directors, Toby Robertson and Christopher Selbie, might as well have taken the extreme of cutting out the Sly scenes entirely.

The antifeminist speech, on the other hand, was superbly treated. Here again, directors have traditionally varied between extremes: giving up, one decides that this is a 400-year-old play after all, and lets its apparently offensive sentiments stand as indicative of a former, benighted age; or, conversely, one spoofs Kate's "obedience" speech in some way, so that she winks at the audience and effectively says, "Of course, I don't believe all this nonsense!" Given Vanessa Redgrave's political views, I assumed beforehand that this production would take the latter route; indeed, I would not have been surprised to see something so updated and adapted that it became *The Taming of Petruchio*. Instead, the directors stepped back and saw Kate's speech in the larger contexts of the play, which explores role playing and obedience not just in this one speech but throughout. Kate, for example, has not only been playing the role of wife badly; she is also a bad daughter and a bad sister. She abuses her father, who has always treated her decently, and she tyrannizes Bianca (even if you were to interpret this play in extremely feminist terms, how could you condone one woman tying up and beating another for no reason except generalized spite?), as she herself will be tyrannized by Petruchio. The ultimate position of the play is that happiness in life requires proper *obedience* to one's own role, which means, in turn, obedience to the bonds of love. "All the World's a Stage" was a theme that obsessed the Renaissance (the very words were inscribed, in Latin, above the main door of the Globe theatre); to play one's role badly, as Kate has done unconsciously and Petruchio does consciously, is to become abusive and miserable, while to play it gracefully and lovingly is to become happy.

In this sense, the play really *is* about the taming of Petruchio as well as of Kate, as this production made abundantly clear. As she

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became more obedient to him, he became more loving to her, so that by the time they got to the "sun-moon" scene, calling the sun the moon and an old man a "young budding virgin" became a kind of game that the two were playing *together* rather than something viciously forced upon her. The obedience speech was delivered lightly and easily rather than pedantically, and when she spoke those final, troublesome words, "And place your hands below your husband's foot," simultaneously performing the gesture herself, the result was not the embarrassed silence that usually occurs, because Petruchio removed her hands himself and brought her to her feet, as his equal. Petruchio, the amoral, selfish adventurer who had originally come "to wive it wealthily in Padua," and seemed willing to do anything for "gold's effect," had become a loving husband.

Vanessa Redgrave is a superb actress, an artist who, like Ezra Pound, seems mercifully able to keep her weird politics separate from her work. She has a firm sense of character (Kate and Cleopatra are about 20 years apart in age, yet she was equally convincing as both), a sense of commitment to the play as a whole rather than just her own part, and finally, like all the great stars, a stage "presence" or radiance that makes her impossible to dislike, whatever you may think of her personally. This radiance comes from more than just physical attractiveness—she is not unattractive, but is after all quite tall and thin, with sharp features. It comes instead from an ability to relax utterly on stage, so that we relax with her and utterly trust her; and from an ability to relate to her surroundings and her fellow actors unselfconsciously. Timothy Dalton, a superb actor of great force and magnetism himself, was perfect with her as Antony and Petruchio, and her ability to see, touch, hear and generally work *with* him was the main source of her own magnetism.

The Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, Britain's two main subsidized companies, were both shaken by scandal this summer. The surface complaint was that Trevor Nunn and Peter Hall, their directors, were making too much money in outside directing jobs. This was seen as particularly irksome in cases where plays like *Amadeus* transferred from the subsidized theatre to the West End, and eventually to Broadway; Nunn and Hall would negotiate deals in which they received huge sums as directors, while the RSC or the National received relatively little. There is an inherent conflict of interest in such arrangements, but whether Nunn and Hall were guilty of exploiting it unfairly, and whether one can keep such individuals as artistic directors on relatively meager salaries without such opportunities, are matters to be debated. The more important issue, which Nunn himself raised, is one of absentee management. Nunn and Hall have been in their positions a long time, and are obviously losing interest in their theatres. The resultant loss of artistic leadership has been particularly a problem with the RSC, which has become a directors' theatre in the worst sense.

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The directors of individual plays, lacking clear overall policy, have often been indulging in cute, self-promoting productions. Currently running at the Barbican (the new London home of the RSC), for example, were a production of *Troilus and Cressida* set in various periods and styles, so incoherent that it was impossible to tell the Greeks from the Trojans, and a modern dress production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, whose main allurement was having the wives play a scene under hair driers. This kind of thing has actually been going on regularly since the productions in the twenties of Barry Jackson and Terence Gray; Jackson dressed Hamlet in golfing knickers, for example, while Gray put characters in *Twelfth Night* on roller skates. Nevertheless, there are always some who greet such productions as brilliantly innovative and daring. This happens less often in England than here, however, and the result over there has been that it has become harder to get good actors to stay with the RSC—and harder to get audiences to attend.

I do not want to paint too gloomy a picture, however. There is still a lot of good work being done at the RSC and the National, if only because they are both large and varied organizations, each drawing on a huge reservoir of talent. One example of the fine achievement of which the RSC is still capable was the production in the Pit, the small theatre at the Barbican, of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, adapted by Christopher Hampton not from the well-known film but rather from the eighteenth-century novel by Choderlos de Laclos, on which the film itself is also based. Scandalous in its time, the novel concerns a wealthy widow, the Marquise de Merteuil, and her even wealthier friend, the Vicomte de Valmont, who viciously plot the seduction of others but agree not to become lovers themselves. Merteuil says she is motivated by a desire for revenge on a lover who has jilted her, but both she and Valmont seem instead motivated by cynicism, boredom, and sadism; in other words, it is actually the kind of "motiveless malignity" that Coleridge ascribed to Iago. They are undone, oddly, by the love that develops between them, belying the very cynicism that is their credo.

Hampton's adaptation is exceptional, maintaining a caustic, philosophical tone that seems typically French; this is a three-hour play that is mostly talk, yet always fascinating, because the dialogue, although witty and understated, is always potentially explosive. The few moments of action—the seduction of Merteuil's niece, the duel at the end in which Valmont first toys with his rival for Merteuil, then allows himself to be killed—erupt out of the quiet, malevolent atmosphere, releasing the enormous tension that has built up. Two outstanding but little-known actors, Lindsay Duncan and Alan Rickman, played Merteuil and Valmont like a pair of leopards, with astonishing grace, ease, and drive. Rickman has such a beautifully resonant voice that he was able to speak extraordinarily quietly and at the same time give an impression of tremendous malevolent pow-

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er. Most important, like Vanessa Redgrave and Timothy Dalton, Duncan and Rickman were wonderfully in touch with each other in their scenes together, playing off each other in a verbal *pas de deux*.

Bob Crowley designed the lovely period costumes, in soft ivory tones, and also did the setting, which consisted of pieces of period furniture and a few drapes. It went unchanged until the duel at the end, yet managed to represent various salons and bedrooms in and around Paris. This gave the production a visually abstract quality that was perfect for the material. Director Howard Davies, who also did the incoherent *Troilus and Cressida*, deserves credit for coordinating such a clear, strong, unified production; it shows that he, like his colleagues, can do excellent work when he serves the play rather than himself.

The National Theatre has fared better under its absentee management than the RSC, because Peter Hall has broken up the company into several independent producing groups, each under a different artistic director. The best of these groups last summer was the one under Peter Wood, which presented a strong *Threepenny Opera*, a delightful *Love for Love*, and a sensitive version of Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei*, adapted and titled *Dalliance* by Tom Stoppard; the last provided more of the original and less of Stoppard than with most of his adaptations, which was helpful since Schnitzler is not well enough known in English. Using small companies does occasionally lead to miscasting—Stephen Moore is a fine actor, for example, but not nearly aristocratic or soldierly enough for Fritz, the hero in *Dalliance*—but sometimes the odd casting yields unusual but effective results, like Tim Curry's Macheath in *Threepenny*. Curry, who played Mozart in the Broadway version, but *not* the film version, of *Amadeus*, has a small build, a strange, lumpy face, and a rather hoarse voice, but he combined these well with a Scottish accent (after all, the character does have a Scottish-sounding name) to produce a rough, strong, offbeat Macheath.

The worst production at the National was Peter Shaffer's sophomoric biblical play *Yonadab*, directed by Peter Hall himself. This was cited as an example of what happens when productions like *Amadeus* are transferred to the commercial theatre and make large profits; pretty soon, commercially-oriented plays are chosen in the first place. The joke was that despite the nudity, middle-brow philosophizing, and cheap cynicism that Shaffer is famous for, *Yonadab* was an utter flop; I saw it with only a few hundred in the audience, yet the actors were condemned to have to perform it many more times.

Yonadab will obviously not transfer anywhere. The system of transfer has often been beneficial to everyone, however. Actors and directors get more money (pay at the National and RSC is very low, even for stars), playwrights get additional royalties, the subsidized theatres get some of the profits (though probably not enough, given

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Polly Hemingway, Jim Norton and Pippa Guard in "Chorus of Disapproval"

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the huge sums that these can sometimes be), and audiences get to see important plays they would have missed because of the limited runs under the repertory system.

A good play that recently transferred to the West End from the National is Alan Ayckbourn's *Chorus of Disapproval*. Ayckbourn has received little serious critical attention, probably because he is so often compared to our Neil Simon. Like Simon, he writes comedies of contemporary life, and like Simon, he makes a lot of money at it, but otherwise the two are very dissimilar. Simon creates mostly eccentric characters, who are sometimes hilarious and sometimes all too predictable; Ayckbourn creates drab, ordinary characters who turn out to be oddly interesting and always funny. Simon's main source of humor is in verbal gags; Ayckbourn almost never uses them, relying instead on character and situation. Finally, Simon has little sense of dramatic structure (his main weakness), while Ayckbourn is obsessed with it; play after play involves some technical novelty, as in *The Norman Conquests*, a trilogy in which the same play is simply repeated three times in different parts of the same house; each play can be viewed independently, and differs in tone and viewpoint from the others, yet has the same six characters and follows the same events.

In *Chorus of Disapproval*, the key technical device is a play within the play; a provincial amateur drama group is performing John Gay's eighteenth-century satire, *The Beggar's Opera* (also the source for Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*). The characters, as usual with Ayckbourn, are ordinary middle class folk, who turn out to be involved in shady business deals, personal intrigue, and sexual aggression. A naive new member joins the troupe, who immediately project their fantasies on him; although he is just a decent, unassuming fellow with no talent, holding an unimportant job in a large corporation, they see him as a great lover, shrewd businessman, and lead performer. Seduced by two women, drawn into both sides of a dubious land scheme, he simultaneously moves up in the cast as it undergoes the attrition that is typical of amateur groups, until he is playing the lead—by which time he has lost his job, his fellow performers have developed total contempt for him, and the women have dropped him.

Ayckbourn plays off the inner versus the outer play with grace and humor; Gay's play is a send-up of the same middle class attitudes and values, particularly sexual prudery, venality, and hypocrisy, as are held by the characters playing them. Gay's song "I'm Bubbled," refers to the South Sea Bubble, the great land scheme of the time, which is reflected in the shady scheme in the outer play; Macheath's having two wives reflects his offstage problem of having two mistresses. Yet ironically there is no happy ending in the main, outer play as there is in *The Beggar's Opera*. Although his plays are very funny, Ayckbourn's vision is dark; sex is an ensnarement,

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while idealism and decency lead merely to loss. As with Chekhov, he combines an underlying sadness with great affection for his characters, yet is unsentimental about them.

In transferring to the West End, *Chorus* took on a largely new cast, all of whom were good, and one of whom, Colin Blakely as the obsessive Welsh director of the provincial amateur theatre company, was especially fine. Ayckbourn himself directed, as he often does (he owns his own theatre in Scarborough, where he tries out most of his plays), skillfully handling the large cast, the many set changes, and the delightful comic business.

Overall, the British theatre continues to show tremendous strength, as it has for three decades. There are problems, complaints, scandals, and colossal failures, as there always are in the theatre (if anything, these are more prevalent in its greatest periods). In New York, fewer shows open each year, major theatres lie dark for months and even years, while prices rise enormously, yet theatre people seem blandly optimistic; in London, there is an explosion of theatrical activity, and people complain constantly. It is obvious which theatre is more alive!

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Fictional Places

IN LOOKING OVER THE QUARTER'S YIELD OF FICTION, it occurred to me that for many years my standard procedure as a chronicler was to begin with some egregious examples of inane, pretentious writing which could be quoted, then dismissed with a wave of the hand and a crushing epithet. After a few of these dismissals, I would move on to more mixed assessments, praise and reservations discreetly ladled out. Then, at the end, one or two quite splendid products could be admiringly dealt with. I may be going soft (or is it Maturity?) but I saw no point in following such procedure with the books that have arrived since last spring. The "bad" ones didn't seem all that bad; nor did any masterpieces present themselves for canonization. Rather there was a good deal of expert, professional, often entertaining and amusing work whose locales ranged from southern New Mexico to upstate New York, from India to Mediterranean France and Spain, from a V.I.P. visitors' box in Fenway Park, Boston, to a lima bean processing plant in Tulaveda, California. Among other things, fiction is for taking us places, and the chronicler, along for the ride, is less than ready or able at the end of it to make any pronouncements about the state of fiction in America today. It seems to be going on.

And in no pen more vigorously than that of George V. Higgins, who since *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1972) has published twelve novels, three long ones over the past three years.[1] There is a fashion among some Higgins aficionados to locate his goodness as a writer back there in the early Eddie Coyle period, while deploring his recent lengthier efforts as examples of a bureaucratized imagination. One way of disagreeing with this view and speaking up for the novel at hand, is to point out that over the years Mr. Higgins has become not a whit easier to read. As with *Eddie Coyle* (which, reread, is even better), the reader must keep ever alert, listening to the voices, indeed performing them, raising them off the page into something heard, while hanging on by the fingernails to story, connections between characters, allusions to something one probably missed earlier in the book. The good reader of Higgins is one prepared to lose his way (I would add "her way" but I suspect he is not most women's favorite novelist), reread the paragraph, even begin again the

[1]IMPOSTORS, by *George V. Higgins*. Henry Holt and Co. $16.95.

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chapter where one got lost. In other words, he is just as easy or hard to read as, oh, Ivy Compton-Burnett—and just as stimulating.

Impostors works the same Higgins territory, Boston and parts south: a club on the 36th floor of a building on Federal Street; a waterfront condo; the St. Botolph's Club, and the Harvard Club on Commonwealth Ave., a luxury box at Fenway Park; New Bedford and Mattapoisett and a mythical but typical southeastern Massachusetts town called Waterford. For the first time in his novels, however, a woman nearly walks off with the plot, though Constance Gates's behavior (she is an investigator who gets what she wants, often by sex and sex-related activity) will probably not satisfy those looking for role-models. But the heart of Mr. Higgins is where it always was—in the language. When, early in *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* a character was "tight as a popcorn fart," and when, measuring the intensity of someone's desire we hear that "He'd fuck a dog with scarlet fever to get parole," one noted something fresh about the novelist's idiom. Even the single wordplay is fresh in the new novel; when someone tells a father that his son should be allowed to pick his own school, dad replies "I will let the kid pick his own nose . . . I will not let him pick his own school."

Forty-five chapters, multi characters and locations, all of them described to the nines. Excessively, it could be said, yet excess is an important part of the fun in reading Higgins, as when Connie Gates and Joe Logan, two of the best people in the book, finally get together at Logan's supper table, where the conversation turns to cole slaw:

> "My idea of slaw," he said, "is the runny stuff you get at the cheaper beachfront restaurants where they give you the fried clams and the scallops in cardboard boats, and the french fries heaped up on paper plates, and the slaw in the big pleated cups."
>
> "Right," she said. "The tartar sauce and the ketchup in little pleated cups, and they're all runny too. But's okay if the clams and the fries come in those cardboard cartons like the Chinese restaurants use for chop suey. Maybe even better. With little packets of salt, and a two-pronged wooden fork."
>
> "You got it," he said, wiping his hands on a paper towel. "Clam chowder in a Styrofoam cup, and you eat it with a white plastic spoon. You sit outside at a picnic table and behind you at the next table there's a family of seven, five screaming kids, one in a car seat propped up on the floor, wants his bottle, and all his mother'll give him's a damned pacifier. That's my idea of cole slaw, by God, and that's what I try to make."

Clearly they speak the same language and are destined for each other. If this passage looks like realism, it's not, but an extremely mannered instance rather of what is pleasing in Higgins' style.

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There are moral values in it as well (readers of *The Boston Globe* may be reminded occasionally of the columnist Mike Barnicle) and they get their zip by being pro-vulgarity, populist oriented (even as the horrible family above is celebrated), against "sensitive" nouvelle-cuisinelike discriminations.

With Higgins you get something lively on every page. Joe Logan, who became an alcoholic after his wife and son were killed by a drunk in a brutal car accident (he is now on the wagon but keeps booze in the house) responds this way when Connie Gates hesitates upon his offering her a drink: "I'm not afraid of the stuff. It never once attacked me, you know. When I was drinking, the bottles didn't sneak into my room at night, pin me, and empty their contents down my throat." About a bar at the Parker House in Boston: "[It] was crowded with people who had spent the day prospering and were now enjoying that fact in loud, confident voices." George Higgins the novelist seems to me both to be prospering and enjoying it mightily. Whether he is, as Julian Symons says in the cover blurb, one of the best novelists alive, he is in any case a superb entertainer, and *Impostors* should convince anyone of that.

In fact maybe the novelist-entertainer distinction should be chucked. Dickens, F.R. Leavis' "great entertainer," turned out to be—so most had already concluded before Leavis joined them—a great novelist. I take Graham Greene's best novels to be his "entertainments" like *A Gun for Sale* and *The Ministry of Fear*. At any rate, it is surely difficult, and probably a mistake, to look for or demand something more than "mere" entertainment, as if too many of us were too easily satisfied by "light" reading. Art as perpetrated by George V. Higgins isn't light, any more than it is in Frederick Busch or Elizabeth Tallent.[2] Mr. Busch is a veteran whose book (the eleventh to his credit) takes as its familiar stomping ground the unmemorable patch of run-down upstate New York farm country north of Binghamton, south of Utica, dotted by towns with names like Sherburne, Poolville, Hubbardsville. This area, filled with marginal houses ("shitboxes" the narrator calls them here) and people ("cornheads" is the term) is the country to which the hero, a four-teen-year-old named Petey, and his father, an ex-detective turned school administrator, have migrated from Brooklyn. Petey's parents are divorced, his mother disappeared, and the lad is in such dangerous shape that he plays Russian roulette with his father's revolver. The novel traces Petey's emergence from self-destruction into a recognition and even acceptance of the world outside his head. It is told in a prose verging on the flat and toneless, often effective as it renders the dismal:

[2]SOMETIMES I LIVE IN THE COUNTRY, by *Frederick Busch*. David R. Godine. $15.95. MUSEUM PIECES, by *Elizabeth Tallent*. Henry Holt and Co. (An Owl Book). $7.95p.

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> There was a horrible house made of thin boards nailed in every direction. It was green-brown and it looked like the air blew through it. A school bus painted blue was in the side yard. Dogs ran next to the car and barked. A little baby in a shirt and no pants stood on the lawn and watched. The place looked like everyone else who used to live there was dead.

Sometimes it gets too flat, too many sentences beginning with "He," but Busch has a firmly sympathetic way with his young hero that manages to make something touching of the nervous relationship between father and son, or between Petey and "Miz Bean," the sort of understanding schoolteacher everyone wants to encounter. The good and bad guys are very apparent—a racist Ku-Kluxer of a clergyman and two evil hunters provide the most notable of heavies—and the good does win out in a storybook finish. But it is such a friendly, intelligent, modest book that a triumph like that feels appropriate.

By contrast, Elizabeth Tallent isn't especially friendly—she's too coolly disengaged from her own creation for such a quality to emerge. Miss Tallent first came to my attention not through the stories she was publishing, but as the author of a book on John Updike, a novelist about whom women don't usually write sympathetically. Part of Tallent's interest in Updike has to do with her own powers as a super-describer of things, here a truck full of calves in cages

> all facing the same way, unevenly banded by the light that falls through the wooden slats. A sparrow lights on the truck bed, moving in hops down an alley framed by gigantic legs and mud-encrusted hooves. The broad curly bellies above the sparrow shift ponderously. When one calf stirs, it nudges the calf beside it until, domino-fashion, each calf in turn has made the drowsily accommodating sideways shift. The sparrow circles a tussock of manure, finds a kernel of corn, flies to the lowest slat, tips its head so that the kernel fits more snugly into its beak and flies away. Immediately another sparrow takes its place.

To see how good this writing is you need to type it out yourself. Miss Tallent is superb on the New Mexico landscape, especially its archaeology. One of her characters is an archaeologist, his ex-wife is a painter, and the novelist in her prose is both as she describes fir trees heavily weighted with snow

> compressing the trees into steep shapes that remind Clarissa of Giacometti's figures, who always seemed to her to be suffering from some unbearable, delicate mood. Like the statues, the ponderosas seem exaggeratedly thin, but there are groves of them,

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> hemming in the road on either side, so that each tree is deprived of its sculptural elegance and pressed into place as a further darkening of the forest.

Sculptural elegance is a good enough phrase for her style, and over the course of the novel it adds up to weighty, substantial, if at times overbearing treatment (it is on occasion hard to breathe).

As for the characters, going-on-thirteen Tara, her separated parents, Clarissa and Peter, and their former and current lovers, it might be said that, like Giacometti's figures, they appear to be suffering from one or another unbearable, delicate mood. Or is it just a splinter in their finger (or tail?) like the one Clarissa perceives while soaking in a hot tub with two other ladies as they discuss their lives? These spoiled, directionless, rather boring sufferers seem to have strayed in from Ann Beattieville (the present-tense narrative is also Beattie-like) although for better or worse Tallent doesn't achieve—doesn't attempt to achieve—what often in Beattie's work are some very funny effects. Miss Tallent's attitudes toward her characters hover on the verge of satire but don't go the whole way; or rather, she holds off from skewering them even when they deserve it, which (to my eyes) is most of the time. The book's real allegiance is to a reality—nature, the erosion of things and general wear and tear, animals, cultural artifacts at various levels, which make the human beings placed against them seem small potatoes. But there is no doubt that Elizabeth Tallent can do a lot with her pen, and on the basis of the novel and a previous collection of stories (*In Constant Flight*) she is a writer to be watched, indeed *read*.

The presence of Ted Solotaroff in Harper & Row's fiction department is making itself felt, not only in Sue Miller's *The Good Mother* but now in short story collections by Russell Banks and a newcomer, James Lasdun.[3] Mr. Banks's stories come after his most ambitious effort as a novelist, *Continental Drift*, which was at home, equally authoritatively in the smalltown burnt-out New Hampshire from which the hero flees, and a more dangerous if less boring Florida in which he settles. Some of the stories in the new book, indeed the best of them, are bound to the same territories; the title story and "Adultery" both follow the fortunes of a young man named Earl who is trying to get his life together, with predictably tragicomic consequences:

> By the time I was nineteen years old I had broken all but three of the Ten Commandments. I'd made no graven images, had killed no one and had not committed adultery. On the other hand, I lied, did not keep the Sabbath holy, did not honor my mother and father, especially my father, and I stole—not much, but

[3]SUCCESS STORIES, by *Russell Banks*. Harper & Row. $15.95. DELIRIUM ECLIPSE, by *James Lasdun*. Harper & Row. $15.95.

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> enough to count as a violation. I'd done it as recently as last week, skimming a few bucks from the night's take at the Thom McAn's out at the Pinellas Shopping Mall, where I worked nights.

This (the opening of "Adultery") is perfect; the deadpan first sentence, the ease of "I'd made no graven images"; and the lovely specificity of the thievery—Thom McAn's and the Pinellas Shopping Mall working together in a suitably sleazy way. What would American writers do without *The Great Gatsby* to depend on both for subject and narrative tone? Mr. Banks is extremely artful in his polite, good-humoredly ironic engaging of the reader, and his stories really end bigger than they began. For example, the conclusion to "Success Story," in which Earl tries to carry a four-by-eight panel (on which he has designed a tropical island paradise for a department store window display) up an escalator, with absolutely disastrous and far-reaching consequences, is a tour de force of painfully comic creation.

Banks's darker side is never far off, though, and not just (and not most convincingly) in the three impersonal fables which break up the more conventional stories of American character and event. "Sarah Cole: A Type of Love Story," about a man who has a love affair with an ugly woman, manages to avoid the complacency attendant on such a possibly gimmicky idea, making us care instead about the woman's experience. And the first and final stories in the book frame it with quite disturbing pathos, a hard, depressing look at lives which are so little "success stories" as to elicit our pity. In the opening one, "Queen for a Day," the young Earl (we will hear more of him later) takes things into his own hands by hanging up the phone on his father who is attempting to get back into the graces of the family he has deserted. In the last and bleakest of the stories ("Firewood") that father, now an alcoholic who gets through the day on vodka, waits for his grown son (Earl again) to come and pick up the load of wood he gave him as a Christmas present. The wood had been dumped, all ten cords of it, in the yard beside the driveway:

> But he thought his son would drive right over from Concord in his Japanese pickup and haul it home, so he left it there on the bony lawn by the driveway. Then, after Christmas there was a thaw, the "January thaw," and the yard turned to muck, the wood sank under its own weight, and it rained, and then there came a freeze again, a hard freeze, and now the wood is glued to the yard, as if molecules of maple and birch have been welded to molecules of frozen grass and dirt.

The father waits and drinks, contemplating this atrocity; the son delays his promised coming, finally calling to delay it another week

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or so—in effect hanging up on his father once more. The rage, the hopelessness that ensue in the father's mind, as he drunkenly stalks out himself, futilely trying to unglue one by one the ten cords—this scene is wonderfully done and a striking end to the book which now feels more than just a bunch of stories. Like Frederick Busch, Russell Banks patiently produces books (this is his ninth) in the name of good writing rather than the creation of masterpieces. We should be grateful.

Perhaps the most unpleasantly memorable of the young English writer, James Lasdun's book of stories (his first book—he is described as "presently completing a novel"), is titled "The Spoiling" and is about how a child foils what he fears will be a marriage between his divorced mother and a man whose annual New Year's Eve buffet (attended by the mother, son in tow) provides the occasion for the child Marty's coup. After swigging a bit of champagne, he wanders into the kitchen where, unattended, the food is set out preparatory to its being served. Marty decides he will limit himself to a couple of items, and he first samples the cold beef and the potato salad, by cramming them into his mouth. Then he decides that no one will ever know if he has just a little taste of everything, and thus begins a tour of the table:

> First he dips his fingers into the taramasalata, delighting in its fishy, oily essence. Then he broaches the yogurt and cucumber salad, finding it a little dull in comparison, so that he has to return for another taste of the taramasalata to restore that original delight. Next, in quick succession, a slice of dressed tomato, another stuffed egg, a fingerful of the delicate avocado mousse, the largest slice of ham, and the flesh of a green olive the size of a plum, all disappear down his throat.

Disdaining the rice salad, he heads on to the cold chicken, washing it down with some red wine that turns out to be retsina and that gets promptly spat out. This disgusting and riveting scene ends with the appalled host cornering him, at which point the child, looking intently at his enemy, "opens his mouth slowly as if making a huge exaggerated smile," and proceeds to vomit on the food table.

In one way or another, something similarly awful occurs in the other stories in *Delirium Eclipse*. James Lasdun's art is nothing if not contrived, in the manner of a Flannery O'Connor, or is it O. Henry gone twisted? There is a lofty chilliness about his style, specializing in embarrassments and humiliations, with food often at their center, as in "Dead Labor" which details the corruption of a serious scholar into a restaurant critic, bedazzled by sex and gustatory expectation:

> At the back of the room a waiter in a white coat was shucking

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> oysters and stacking them on beds of crushed ice. Deep-pink sides of smoked salmon were laid out along a table, between sunflowers with king prawns for petals and caviar for seeds. There was a tank with long sea trout speeding to and fro in it. Another with lobsters and giant crayfish, snouted, plated, bristling with spines and wiry antennae; prehistoric. Colored lights shone from within the tanks, submarine blues and greens on coral trees and arches of rock.

Indeed there is something snouted and submarine about Mr. Lasdun's imagination, and though the verdict is still out on its staying power the promised novel should give us more evidence. For now, he has a handsomely unforgiving group of pieces.

I had mixed feelings about Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's selected stories, admiring the absolute assurance of their narrative control while feeling a sameness about both their tone and subject.[4] In an introduction to the volume she describes her own mixed feelings about India (can't get along with or without it) as a Central European woman educated in England, married to an Indian: "To live in India and be at peace, one must to a very considerable extent become Indian and adopt Indian attitudes, habits, beliefs, assume if possible an Indian personality. But how is this possible? And even if it were possible—without cheating oneself—would it be desirable?" This is the main subject of her stories, in which the protagonist is often a white woman in India who one way or another Goes Native. Often she hooks up with an enchanter who uses her for his purposes (he may be a guru, or freeloader, or both) and usually discards her. At the end of one of these stories, "A Spiritual Call," the English heroine Daphne has agreed to accompany her guru, Swamji, to California at the invitation of a rich American patron named Mrs. Fisher. Another of Swamji's women, Helga, has also been invited, and at the close of the story, Daphne and Helga, both wearing the saris given them by Swamji (who has insisted they be worn) meet each other and head back to the ashram:

> Helga was wearing her sari all wrong, it was too short for her and her feet coming out at the end were enormous. She looked ridiculous but no one cared; Daphne didn't either. She was glad to be with Helga, and she thought probably she would be glad to be with Mrs. Gay Fisher as well. She was completely happy to be going to California, and anywhere else he might want her to accompany him.

This is ironic, I suppose, but the presentation is so coolly non-commital, always at the same level of assertion, that one couldn't care

[4]OUT OF INDIA, by *Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.* William Morrow & Co. $16.95.

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less about the passive heroine and her fate. Miss Jhabvala's impeccably clear style doesn't finally put enough pressure on us to make the story a significant one, and I found this generally to be the case with the ones collected here.

A throwback myself, I am sentimentally disposed to American writers who light on the 1940s as their province. Richard Yates has been hanging around there for years and his new book (and seventh novel) expertly locates itself in a small Long Island town in 1942, just as the draft is getting into swing.[5] There are the usual Yatesian staples: a horrendous mother-in-law, as much to be pitied as censured; a husband who can't quite cope with being married and sleeping with just one women; an awkward, imaginative adolescent. The women appear to be unintelligent but stubborn, living pathetically inside their limited language; the men are uneasy, self-pitying and furtive. Just like life? Ever since *Revolutionary Road*, his first novel, Mr. Yates has been telling us that's the way it is; there is by now a practiced satisfaction with which we watch him settling down to the task of exposing his characters and making things go wrong for them, as inevitably they do. Putting them through the wringer, more or less.

Yates's career is marked by his having written such an impressive first book that subsequent ones always seemed rather less so. But *Cold Spring Harbor* is tighter and shorter than his last (*Young Hearts Crying*), if a little circumscribed by an old-fashioned narrative style which behaves as if modernism had never happened. Yates is acute at rendering embarrassments, humiliations, self-delusory fantasies, and as always his memory put me in touch with things I knew but had forgotten I knew about a past life, circa 1942:

> Whenever the Drake family went to the movies, wherever they happened to be living, they never bothered to find out what time the main feature began: much of their pleasure came from waiting for a prolonged confusion to clarify itself on the screen. Eventually, after various tantalizing elements of plot had gained more and more coherence either in development or in resolution, each of the Drakes would try to be the first to turn and whisper "This is where we came in"; then, more often than not, they would agree to stay through the end again, in order to intensify the story they already knew.

This is perfect, and true, as are the remembered songs from "that summer of 1942 as they were wafted dimly out to him among the parked cars"—"Don't Get Around Much Anymore," but also one I'd nearly buried, "He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings" ("Altho' some

[5]COLD SPRING HARBOR, by *Richard Yates*. Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence. $16.95.

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people say he's just a crazy guy, / To me he means a million other things" etc.). My guess is that there is a good bit of autobiography in this novel and if so it is all to the good. *Cold Spring Harbor* is a piece of writing without a wasted sentence, and in that way I understand Robert Stone's back cover blurb about how Richard Yates's work is important to anyone concerned with writing.

Another "writer's writer," I suppose, is Thomas Williams, whose *The Hair of Harold Roux* was a dark horse winner of the National Book Award some years back, but which yours truly never finished. The new book[6] has a lovely epigraph from Santayana's *The Life of Reason*: ". . . so in love the heart surrenders itself entirely to the one being that has known how to touch it. That being is not selected; it is recognised and obeyed." *The Moon Pinnace* is about the love that is recognized and obeyed between John Hearne and Dory Perkins, two young people in a small New Hampshire town in 1948. Although the setting is not unlike Richard Yates's, the treatment is very different. Mr. Williams is as expansive and leisurely as Yates is economical; moreover, he has various "poetic" or symbolic interests (as in the novel's title, which I won't expatiate on) foreign to Yates's more direct treatment of things. And, let it be said, he entertains a somewhat kinder view of human possibility, especially in the fortunes of his lovers who marry and live reasonably happy ever afterwards.

There is another love affair in the book though, this one with America, the unknown country John Hearne travels through on his motorcycle in search of his absconded father. Williams' idea was to establish the lovers together in the first ten chapters, then send John out West and Dory to her summer hotel job, alternating chapters for each; finally to bring them back together. In this scheme he has mixed success; the travelogue John-on-motorcycle part very good indeed; the Dory-with-strange hotel guests not so convincing. And John's experiences out West where he discovers his father and imbecilic half-sister (the father is a fundamentalist cult preacher) and sleeps with his father's beautiful movie-starlike wife, and where he works in a frozen lima bean factory (this is the first novel to make much of lima beans)—it all adds up to a tall story that threatens to become wearying. But if it is a novel which sometimes irritates, in the long run—if you persist—it is touching and satisfying. At the book's end the lovers, late middle-aged now, look back on their life in 1948: "'It wasn't a bad year, was it?' he says. 'Harry Truman won, didn't he?'":

> He, too, thinks about the world and his country and history he has witnessed. He can't define his country because it is the air he breathes, the water (becoming acidic, oh, woe) he swims in. In a

[6]THE MOON PINNACE, by *Thomas Williams*. Doubleday & Co. $17.95.

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> way, he and Dory are his country. . . . But his country, his life—how can he define it, them? A black man or woman can now take a leak in Utah; that's no small thing. Hold on to that.

Thomas Williams holds on through this novel, taking chances, seeing what he can do with the language and with a world he believes it can describe. So he is to be commended for his good faith, ambition, and humor.

In conclusion, three posthumous publications by writers who have done better in the books they oversaw into print, yet who, now a part of "literature," present themselves to the salvage hunters.[7] Hemingway's novel, trimmed down and into shape by a Scribners editor, is agreeable enough and rather more sexually forthright and exploratory than was his wont. In *The Garden of Eden* the young writer and his wife of a few months, living on the coast of France, complicate their lives by taking on a "girl" with whom they both sleep but who soon adheres to the writer. The wife has problems, shall we say, involving her wanting to be alternately girl and boy, brother and sister, and there is much dark play involving having her hair (and the writer's) cut and colored a certain way. The husband is *very* serious, à la Hemingway, about his work, and the part of the book dealing with that activity is quite interesting and revealing. The wife is allowed big Hemingway-type sentiments like "When you start to live outside yourself . . . it's all dangerous," and there is much food and drink, ritualistically described: "On this morning there was brioche and red raspberry preserve and the eggs were boiled and there was a pat of butter that melted as they stirred them and salted them lightly and ground pepper over them in their cups." Let there be boiled eggs! and lo the eggs were boiled. There is also the sun, the breeze, the pines, the sea, in all their purity. But those characters! As Matthew Arnold remarked about Shelley, Byron and their circle, "What a set!" (Wilfrid Sheed suggested in *The New York Review of Books* that the three young people in *The Garden of Eden* should have a pitcher of ice cubes poured over them.) The novel has enough of the authentic Hemingway style to make it hard to decide whether mainly that style goes pure and deep, or is mannered to the edge of silliness. But I have trouble deciding that even with vintage Hemingway, which is partly what makes him fun to read and teach.

Barbara Pym's "academic novel" (it was untitled by her) was an attempt—she said in a letter to Philip Larkin—to be "a sort of Margaret Drabble effort," and she rewrote it in hopes of making it more "sharp" and "swinging" but was never satisfied with the result.

[7]THE GARDEN OF EDEN, by *Ernest Hemingway.* Scribner's. $18.95. AN ACADEMIC QUESTION, by *Barbara Pym.* E. P. Dutton. $15.95. STILLINESS AND SHADOWS, by *John Gardner.* Alfred A. Knopf. $18.95.

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Rightly so, since with a typical paragraph like the following one understands why such sharp swinging would be quite against her true grain (the heroine and her mother are described):

> After breakfast we went shopping, then had coffee at the Old Forge. Two women who had just retired from jobs in London came to lunch. They were rather nice, spinster sisters, one in her late fifties and the other just sixty. Their lives were busy in an admirable way, full of interest and the pleasure of having time to do the things they had always wanted to do. I regarded them with envy as they described alterations they were making to their garden and the motoring holiday in Shropshire they had planned for later in the year. They were still good-looking and one of them, I felt sure, had once been beautiful. They must have loved in their time, perhaps loved and lost and come through it unscathed.

Doesn't "advance" the novel one bit and surely lacks "swing," but one wouldn't want it changed a bit, and it is appropriate and attractive in a writer where (in her admirer, Larkin's phrase) "Nothing, like something, happens anywhere."

Finally, John Gardner, the brutal dismissal of whose work by Richard Gilman in *The New York Times Book Review* should not prevent readers taking a look at these recovered fictional efforts. The first one, *Stillness*, is an autobiographical, relatively short novel (it has been pruned) from which Gardner had already quarried, in different form, a couple of memorable stories ("Stillness" and "Redemption"). The other, *Shadows,* is a huge monster, incomplete and nowhere near in comprehensible shape, about an alcoholic detective in Carbondale, Illinois. Gardner's friend, fellow-writer, and editor, Nicholas delBanco, has edited and written a fine introduction to the volume.

Gardner's career reached its apex when he received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1976 for what I take to be his best novel, *October Light*. Thereafter he never produced anything so fine, although his last novel, *Mikelsson's Ghosts*, while overlong and overstuffed, had much that was splendid about it, especially its treatment of landscape and the spirit of place generally. I call Gilman's dismissal of his novelistic achievement "brutal" because—to say nothing of the finished works—Gilman wilfully ignores writing as good as the following sentences from *Stillness*, where the novelist-hero's wife Joan imagines herself as a girl of fifteen in St. Louis, then projects herself into the future—the present as she now sees it:

> All the great stores had been downtown then, Famous-Barr, for instance, glittering, high-ceilinged, ceremonious inside its towering, gold-framed revolving doors, the aisles choked with shop-

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> pers, most of them white, the counters and high walls vending wonders—coats and solemn-toned, stately dresses with the sleeves pinned out, far overhead, like hovering angels . . . and everywhere the scent of perfumes and talcums, newly printed books, the leather of new shoes, a smell as exciting and at the same time cloying as a vault of roses in one of the big downtown flowershops, or the thick, sweet incense in a Catholic church. Suppose in the twinkling of an eye, Joan imagined, that whole world vanished, and the girl on the corner, herself at fifteen, looked, stunned and afraid, at a city gone dark and empty, at least by comparison with the teeming, bright, jubilant city she knew: there came a silence, as if all the gay sounds of the world had been abruptly turned off, like the music and static on a radio; and there came the same instant a visual stillness, as if a heart had stopped—no motion but three or four hurrying Negroes, strangely dressed, dangerous, with hair grown long and puffed up like that in a Tarzan picture; nothing else stirring but two pigeons overhead and a newspaper blowing along the pavement. "I'm in the future!" the imaginary Joan would have thought, "and there's been some awful war, or a plague, and the world's been ruined."

I would be willing to forsake much of the writing in the books considered here, if I could keep a passage like this one. Or the following portrait of the artist as a young man, practicing the French horn:

> On a summer evening after chores, he would sometimes walk out past the barn with his horn and climb the steep hill to the apple orchard and play—his father's cows watching from the far side of the electric fence—until his lips felt flabby and he could hardly keep his eyes open. He would play scales, lip trills, open-horn arpeggios, etudes, fragments from concertos, orchestral snippets. Sometimes on clean-smelling warm summer nights he would walk farther, to the wide, high hill at the back of the farm from which he could see all the houses and villages for miles around, and there, in sight of his neighbors' lights but as safely remote from their judgments and opinions as from the stars overhead, he would play his emotions without daring to name them, without even directly feeling them, lightly distracted—as once he had been by ensilage in his collar—by the exigencies of horn technique.

If on the basis of these two samples John Gardner is not for you, then so be it. Although I'd have to disagree with Mr. delBanco's contention that the second manuscript published here, *Shadows*, would have been a major novel (he compares it to *The Sunlight Dialogues* about which I also have lots of reservations), *Stillness* seems to me a permanent and valuable addition to the fiction this writer left us.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Eminent Victorian Goes Too Far West

As Trollope nears the end of this account[1] of his travels in the United States (plus several weeks in Canada) during the fall and winter of 1861-62, he owns that despite his expectations nothing west of Boston has after all been much to his taste: "I was always happy and comfortable in the eastern cities, and generally unhappy and uncomfortable in the West. I had previously been inclined to think that I should like the roughness of the West, and that in the East I should encounter an arrogance which could have kept me always on the verge of hot water; but in both these surmises I found myself to have been wrong."

No nineteenth-century English gentleman was less of a stuffed shirt than Trollope, but none was more of a nineteenth-century English gentleman either, this novelist of the domestic manners of the Victorian heartland, the familiar and unerring chronicler of county gentry and clerics and radiantly nubile English virgins; the only worthy successor to Jane Austen. Thirty years earlier another English visitor to the States, Fanny Trollope, had suffered a disappointment that anticipated her son's, and had written a book about it that was the best-seller of the day on both sides of the Atlantic: *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, a catalog of horrors which for instance took such strenuous offense at the Western habit of public spitting that, during the period of the book's notoriety, "to trollope" meant in American colloquial usage "to spit." Fanny's experiences, before she retreated forever back to the Old World, had centered on an ill-fated "bazaar" she ran in Cincinnati. Anthony's carried him as far as Minnesota and Iowa; but, thirty years later and up to five hundred miles farther, though he had set out expecting to take kindlier views than his mother's account and even to atone for it, he was chagrined to discover that it remained a reliable guide to the domestic manners of Westerners:

> A dozen of them will sit for hours round a stove, speechless. They chew tobacco and ruminate. They are not offended if you speak to them, but they are not pleased. They answer with monosyllables, or, if it be practicable, with a gesture of the head. They

[1]NORTH AMERICA, by *Anthony Trollope*. St. Martin's Press. Two volumes. $35.00.

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> care nothing for the graces,—or shall I say, for the decencies of life? They are essentially a dirty people. Dirt, untidiness, and noise, seem in nowise to afflict them. Things are constantly done before your eyes, which should be done and might be done behind your back. . . .

(He doesn't mention, perhaps out of filial deference, the spitting—which of course regularly punctuates, as anybody knows who has ever watched a baseball game in closeup on TV, the tobacco-chewing.)

Lest we infer that the high-toned Englishman is just writing off one of the many indistinguishable lesser breeds, Trollope reminds us that even for so hardened a veteran tourist as himself the West is unique:

> I have eaten in Bedouin tents, and have been ministered to by Turks and Arabs. I have sojourned in the hotels of old Spain and of Spanish America. I have lived in Connaught, and have taken up my quarters with monks of different nations. I have, as it were, been educated to dirt, and taken out my degree in outward abominations. But my education had not reached a point which would enable me to live at my ease in the western States. A man or woman who can do that may be said to have graduated in the highest honours, and to have become absolutely invulnerable, either through the sense of touch, or by the eye, or by the nose. Indifference to appearances is there a matter of pride. A foul shirt is a flag of triumph. . . .

So their immodesty and dirt are as bad as can be; but what bothers him most of all is their unsociableness:

> They are slow in speech, preferring to sit in silence, with the tobacco between their teeth. They drink, but are seldom drunk to the eye; they begin at it early in the morning, and take it in a solemn, sullen, ugly manner, standing always at a bar; swallowing their spirits, and saying nothing as they swallow it. They drink often, and to great excess; but they carry it off without noise, sitting down and ruminating over it with the everlasting cud within their jaws. I believe that a stranger might go into the West, and passing from hotel to hotel through a dozen of them, might sit for hours at each in the large everlasting public hall, and never have a word addressed to him.

Yet because Trollope is a fair and intelligent observer, however disoriented he may feel in an atmosphere unbreathable by himself, he can't leave his Westerners without conceding their as it were *negative* virtues:

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> I spoke of a man whose furniture had been sold to pay a heavy tax raised on him specially as a secessionist; the same man had also been refused the payment of rent due to him by the Government, unless he would take a false oath. I may presume that he was ruined in his circumstances by the strong hand of the northern army. But he seemed in nowise to be unhappy about his ruin. He spoke with some scorn of the martial law in Missouri, but I felt that it was esteemed a small matter by him that his furniture was seized and sold. No men love money with more eager love than these western men, but they bear the loss of it as an Indian bears his torture at the stake. . . .
>
> I cannot part with the West without saying in its favour that there is a certain manliness about its men, which gives them a dignity of their own. It is shown in that very indifference of which I have spoken. Whatever turns up the man is still there,—still unsophisticated and still unbroken. No race of men requires less outward assistance than these pioneers of civilization. They rarely amuse themselves. Food, newspapers, and brandy-smashes suffice of life; and while these last, whatever may occur, the man is still there in his manhood. The fury of the mob does not shake him, nor the stern countenance of his present martial tyrant [the Civil War has begun, and Missouri is under martial law]. . . .

Trollope's West, far from being wild, is contained, inward, impassive, stoical, undemanding, enduring.

At the same date, young Mark Twain was out in the Nevada mining country prospecting for silver and speculating in mining stock—losing everything and bearing the loss, if not quite like Trollope's torture-proof Indian, in any case with unimpaired ambition for the next push—and then to keep eating took a job writing for a newspaper (living and reporting "the roughness of the West" as later he laughed it up and set it down for *Roughing It*, a book I'd love to have Trollope's reaction to: we know that in 1873—the book was published in 1872—Twain dined with Trollope at the Garrick Club in London and was charmed by his "voluble and animated" host's "smooth and limpid and sparkling stream of faultless English"; but nothing more survives from Twain about Trollope and nothing at all from Trollope about Twain). In a couple of years Twain moved to San Francisco to cover the local news for the *Call*, where he published such daily items as the following: "Catherine Moran, whom we spoke of yesterday as having attempted to segregate Mrs. Markee with an axe, was sentenced to forty days' imprisonment, or to pay a fine of one hundred and fifty dollars—and served her right. Mr. Swartz was arraigned on some charge or other—petty larceny perhaps—in trying to steal a kiss from the widow Ellen Niemeyer, while she was locked up in the City Prison—a delicate attention, which, considering the extremely mild stagger she makes of beauty,

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she ought to have regarded as a most reckless and desperate compliment, rather than as a crime"; or another characteristic criminal-court vignette:

> John Smith was brought into the city prison last night, by Officers Conway and Minson, so limbered up with whiskey that you might have hung him on a fence like a wet shirt. His battered slouch-hat was jammed down over his eyes like an extinguisher; his shirt-bosom (which was not clean, at all) was spread open, displaying his hair trunk beneath; his coat was old, and short-waisted, and fringed at the edges, and exploded at the elbows like a blooming cotton-boll, and its collar was turned up, so that one could see by the darker color it exposed that the garment had known better days, when it was not so yellow, and sunburnt, and freckled with grease-spots, as it was now; it might have hung about its owner symmetrically and gracefully, too, but now it had a general hitch upward, in the back, as if it were climbing him . . .

—and as much again of headlong descriptive exuberation. One feature of San Francisco was the daily risk of earthquakes ("The house seemed to waltz from side to side with a quick motion, suggestive of sifting corn meal through a sieve; afterward it rocked grandly to and fro like a prodigious cradle, and in the meantime several persons started downstairs to see if there were anybody in the street so timid as to be frightened at a mere earthquake"); but Twain could even turn a risky phrase on their *failure* to occur: "However, the trouble cannot be remedied; we know of nothing that will answer as a substitute for one of those convulsions—to an unmarried man." The West was immodest and dirty all right, but shiftier and more diverse in its moods and promises than Trollope had had the opportunity to notice; on its own private terms, more alert and more sociable too. (Nor had Dickens noticed, traveling among the Americans in 1842 as he recollects them in *American Notes*: "They certainly are not a humorous people, and their temperaments always impressed me as being of a dull and gloomy character"; "There is no conversation, no laughter, no cheerfulness, no sociality; except in spitting.")

What the foreign visitors saw was partial, but they all understood that something new was going on here. Trollope and, a generation earlier, Fanny Trollope and Dickens and Alexis de Tocqueville recognized the novelty of it, responded to it energetically with varying degrees of sympathy and alarm. It wasn't European; it wasn't civilization or culture in the honorific sense; its isolation and limitless physical and geographical resources bestowed advantages it had to make use of without the lessons and precedents of the Old Country's social and political history. The philosopher Tocqueville praised and discriminated in infinite detail with angelic precision,

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could generalize generously out of every American particular he turned up or lucidly inferred or extrapolated; but he had dark intimations, he feared the tyranny of the majority, the confounding of equality with freedom and the eventual deadly prevalence of equality, he foresaw the coming of a condition which he could describe but which hadn't a name till in our century it was called totalitarianism and made itself at home in of all places the very navel of Europe.

As for Trollope, innocent of any philosophical intentions, he had the rich and ages-old example of England. It didn't always help. Trollope as John Bull can't warm to the American novelty because novelty by definition lacks rich and ages-old examples of anything at all: for example England's evolved and time-tested constitution which is the more workable for being unwritten; or its evolved and tested Parliamentary form of government whose agents are in effect subject to instant recall because directly answerable to public opinion and, in the clash of open everyday pro-and-con debate, to one another. (If only the Americans, having kicked out King George, had installed at once a set of perfect replicas of his unwritten constitution and ages-old legislature!) True, he acknowledges that as written constitutions go the United States Constitution has been the best ever; that under it

> the American people have achieved much material success and great political power. As a people they have been happy and prosperous. Their freedom has been secured to them, and for a period of seventy-five years they have lived and prospered without subjection to any form of tyranny. This in itself is much, and should, I think, be held as a preparation for greater things to follow. . . . That any written constitution should serve its purposes and maintain its authority in a nation for a dozen years is in itself much for its framers. Where are now the constitutions which were written for France?

"But," adds Trollope, "this constitution has so wound itself into the affections of the people, has become a mark for such reverence and love, has, after a trial of three quarters of a century, so recommended itself to the judgment of men, that the difficulty consists in touching it, not in keeping it."

It has, that is, shortcomings which theoretically could be corrected by amendments; but it is held in such awe by the American people, and there are so many obstructions to the amendment process, that the shortcomings will probably never be corrected. One such, according to Trollope, is that it confers too much power and too little responsibility on the President, who is answerable only to the voters and only once every four years; and especially on his cabinet, who are answerable only to the President:

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> in these days . . . responsibility does not mean the fear of any great punishment [such as impeachment and conviction], but the necessity of accounting from day to day for public actions. A leading statesman has but slight dread of the axe, but is in hourly fear of his opponent's questions. The President of the United States is subject to no such questionings; and as he does not even require a majority in either House for the maintenance of his authority, his responsibility sits upon him very slightly. Seeing that Mr. Buchanan has escaped any punishment for maladministration, no President need fear the anger of the people.

Trollope's two arch-villains are ex-President Buchanan, whom he several times calls a "traitor" and charges with having deliberately strengthened the South's military position just before the war; and Lincoln's Secretary of State Seward, for his abrogations of civil rights and his *de facto* assumption of dictatorial wartime authority. Trollope obviously doesn't think much, either, of Lincoln himself, whom he seems to consider a kind of pallid rubber-stamp at first for Seward and, when the war heats up, for Secretary of War Stanton;[2] thus the President—constitutionally in possession, as Trollope sees it, of irresponsible power—can yield his power to one or another appointee of his who doesn't ever have to face the electorate.

Trollope's attitudes toward the Civil War are, in certain of their details, idiosyncratic to say the least. The oddest is in two parts: (1) the North will win the war; and (2) it will thereupon allow the Gulf States to secede and establish their own sovereign nation:

> "We will never give it up," one [Northern] gentleman said to me—and, indeed, many have said the same, "till the whole territory is again united from the Bay to the Gulf! It is impossible that we should allow of two nationalities within those limits." "And do you think it possible," I asked, "that you should receive back in your bosom this people which you now hate with so deep a ha-

[2]So he thought in 1862. Three years later, he had changed his mind, eulogizing the assassinated President as "the man whose services were at the time of more value to the world than those, probably, of any other living human being. . . . The great requisite for a supreme governor of the United States at the present moment are courage, constancy, patience, moderation, and mercy; and these were exactly the attributes with which Mr. Lincoln was preeminently gifted. . . . Here, in England, it may at any rate be hoped that we shall take a lesson from our past mistakes, and not show ourselves too prone to condemn a man who fills a high place, because there is something ridiculous in our eyes in any such man being in any such place. That we did so in regard to Mr. Lincoln in the early days of his Presidency it is impossible for us to deny. We taught ourselves to regard him as a very little man,—partly because he had worked in the field with his hands when he was a lad, partly because we only knew him as a stump-orator, partly because he did not come up in his outward presence to our ideas of the personal dignity of a man in high station, and partly because he came from the far west. . . ." (Letter from Anthony Trollope, *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 5, 1865.)

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> tred, and receive them again into your arms as brothers on equal terms? . . . When you have flogged them into a return of fraternal affection, are they to keep their slaves or are they to abolish them?" "No," said my friend, "it may not be practical to put those rebellious States at once on an equality with ourselves. . . . For a time they must, perhaps, lose their full privileges; but the Union will be anxious to readmit them at the earliest possible period." "And as to the slaves?" I asked again. "Let them emigrate to Liberia: back to their own country." I could not say that I thought much of the solution of the difficulty. It would, I suggested, overtask even the energy of America to send out an emigration of four million souls, to provide for their wants in a new and uncultivated country, and to provide after that for the terrible gap made in the labour market of the Southern States. . . .

Slavery is bad (for a sustained and documented reminder of its day-to-day meaning, Trollope would have done well to reread Dickens' furious chapter on slavery in *American Notes*), and as a patriotic Englishman he's glad and proud that England got rid of it long ago with a minimum amount of dislocation and anxiety; repatriation of the freed American slaves back to Africa is no doubt as unfeasible as he argues; his attentiveness to fact leads him to brush aside much fancy talk of the time (as well as some in our time) and state flatly that the cause of the war is slavery and nothing else; he recalls the most tragic development in early American history, as the South—from being able to contemplate for the not too distant future the attrition and disappearance of slavery—gradually trapped itself in an economy and at last a matching sacred doctrine of almost total dependence on slave labor; but his commitment to John-Bull practicality prevents him from imagining the possibility that there are great historical occasions—wars of principle, for example—in which the moral side gives up trying to undo the Gordian knot and takes a hatchet to it.

Trollope is impressed by the sheer size of everything in the States, for instance the size of the war, which as he notes has already deployed the biggest armies in history; but somehow the size of the nation that can—on both sides!—mobilize such armies in less than a year seems to him unnatural and unstable (nor does he take seriously the Northern gentleman's unquestioning adherence to the metaphysical idea of "the Union"): "different people with different habits living at long distances from each other cannot well be brought together on equal terms under one Government. . . . The North and South are virtually separated, and the day will come in which the West also will secede." Balkanization, then; though here too Trollope can't think as small as he would like: England, say, or the sovereign principality of Delaware or Rhode Island.

Not that he ever omits to notice and record what's in front of his nose—e.g. the novelty of the American railway system:

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> With us in England, it is difficult to realize the importance which is attached to a railway in the States, and the results which a railway creates. We have roads everywhere, and our country had been cultivated throughout, with more or less care, before our system of railways had been commenced; but in America, especially in the North, the railways have been the precursors of cultivation. They have been carried hither and thither, through primeval forests and over prairies, with small hope of other traffic than that which they themselves would make by their own influences. The people settling on their edges have had the very best of all roads at their service; but they have had no other roads. The face of the country between one settlement and another is still in many cases utterly unknown; but there is the connecting road by which produce is carried away, and new comers are brought in. The town that is distant a hundred miles by the rail is so near that its inhabitants are neighbours; but a settlement twenty miles distant across the uncleared country is unknown, unvisited, and probably unheard of by the women and children. Under such circumstances the railway is everything. It is the first necessity of life, and gives the only hope of wealth. It is the backbone of existence from whence spring, and by which are protected, all the vital organs and functions of the community. It is the right arm of civilization for the people, and the discoverer of the fertility of the land. It is all in all to those people, and to those regions. It has supplied the wants of frontier life with all the substantial comfort of the cities, and carried education, progress, and social habits into the wilderness. . . .

It might even be one of the new sorts of connective tissue binding together a nation that for a European mind looks just too big to stay in one piece.

And not just sheer size that's almost too big to imagine; but hitherto unimaginable productive abundance, which Trollope documents with pages of statistics that culminate in this prophetic peroration:

> I went down to the granaries, and climbed up into the elevators. I saw the wheat running in rivers from one vessel into another, and from the railroad vans up into the huge bins on the top stories of the warehouses;—for these rivers of food run up hill as easily as they do down. I saw the corn measured by the forty bushel measure with as much ease as we measure an ounce of cheese, and with greater rapidity. I ascertained that the work went on, week day and Sunday, day and night incessantly; rivers of wheat and rivers of maize ever running. I saw the men bathed in corn as they distributed it in its flow. I saw bins by the score laden with wheat, in each of which bins there was space for a comfortable

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> residence. I breathed the flour, and drank the flour, and felt myself to be enveloped in a world of breadstuff. And then I believed, understood, and brought it home to myself as a fact, that here in the corn lands of Michigan, and amidst the bluffs of Wisconsin, and on the high table plains of Minnesota, and the prairies of Illinois, had God prepared the food for the increasing millions of the Eastern world, as also for the coming millions of the Western.

And hitherto unimaginable governmental solicitude to provide a free education for the whole range of this vast and unendingly widely dispersed citizenry:

> education has made life for the million . . . better than life for the million is with us. They have begun at the beginning, and have so managed that every one may learn to read and write,—have so managed that almost every one does learn to read and write. With us this cannot now be done. Population had come upon us in masses too thick for management before we had as yet acknowledged that it would be a good thing that these masses should be educated. Prejudices, too, had sprung up, and habits, and strong sectional feelings, all antagonistic to a great national system of education. . . .

And there's the new world of marvelous gadgets, led by the Pullman car:

> I confess I have always taken a delight in seeing these beds made up, and consider that the operations of the change are generally as well executed as the manoeuvres of any pantomime in Drury Lane. . . . [The car] looks as far removed from all bedroom accommodation, as the baker's barrow does from the steam-engine into which it is to be converted by harlequin's wand. But the negro goes to work much more quietly than the harlequin, and for every four seats in the railway car he builds up four beds, almost as quickly as the hero of the pantomime goes through his performance. The great glory of the Americans is in their wondrous contrivances. . . . In their huge hotels all the bell-ropes of each house ring on one bell only, but a patent indicator discloses a number, and the whereabouts of the ringer is shown. . . . Soda-water bottles open themselves without any trouble of wire or strings. Men and women go up and down stairs without motive power of their own. Hot and cold water are laid on to all the chambers;—though it sometimes happens that the water from both taps is boiling, and that when once turned on it cannot be turned off by any human energy. . . .

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—because, as the English gentleman observes with satisfaction, no gadget is flawless, not excepting our admirable Pullman: "the feeling of dirt on the following morning is rather oppressive" (and which of us, having experienced it ourselves in the years before air-conditioned fixed-window diesel-fueled trains, will not recall it immediately and squirm once more in memory of those inescapable siftings of cinder-dust?).

Because the book doesn't relax and ultimately come up all roses. Trollope holds out to the last. He loathes central heating ("those damnable hot-air pipes"), which he keeps denouncing as if it's the specific American vice and addiction ("hot-air drinking is like dram-drinking"), and which he believes will destroy the nation's health and the beauty of its women. And, despite all their "conveniences," he loathes those huge, half-empty American hotels where, in the Brobdingnagian mausoleum-like public rooms, elderly women bang away now and again at tinny pianos and will even *sing*! to shatter the awful silence; where, at the long long table of the dining-hall, inexorably on time arrive the three square meals a day of gigantic hunks of greasy meat on multitudes of platters to the unspeaking bowed heads of hordes of voracious eaters as if in a penitentiary. And furthermore . . .

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HARRY GOLDGAR

Rilke's Transformations

I

"NIRGENDS, GELIEBTE, WIRD WELT SEIN, ALS INNEN," writes Rilke in the Seventh Duino Elegy. "Nowhere, beloved, can world exist but within. / Life passes in transformation. And, ever diminishing, / vanishes what's outside . . ." (J.B. Leishman-Stephen Spender translation). The verses are a paradigm of the poet's life, in all its interiority and its rejection of the ephemeral "what's outside." But Rilke was by temperament extremely gregarious; Donald Prater's very detailed and very respectful biography[1] shows him constantly struggling for the solitude he needed for creative work against the distractions of social intercourse, a legion of staunch friends and adoring admirers clamoring at the gates. More often than not, especially if the admirer was an attractive woman, he yielded.

Notice that the lines in the elegy, albeit their subect is the world within, are addressed to a "Geliebte," a "beloved." Rilke's women, with their often insatiable demands upon his time and energy, their inroads upon his creative powers, flit through the pages of Prater's biography like so many butterflies. After a time one loses count; the women become nearly indistinguishable; their photographs reflect a series of vaguely similar, smartly made-up, smartly coiffed 1910s and 1920s faces; one fails in the attempt to memorize their pet names—"Nikê," "Merline," "Liliane," "Loulou," "Benvenuta," "Mimi," and the rest—one can't keep Rilke's women straight.

What he wanted, always optimistically expected, and never found, in his wife Clara Westhoff, the sculptress (from whom he lived apart most of the time, after the first few months of their marriage, but whom he never divorced), and all the others, was the woman who would love him but leave him alone to write his poetry, women who, like the Gaspara Stampa of the Elegies, "had risen above the need to be loved in return." He believed in "the positive power of spurned or unrequited love," in which he was to be the spurner. The lovers were to be "guardians of each other's solitude." Here it is in a letter to Baladine Klossowska ("Merline"), drafted but never mailed, in 1921:

[1] A RINGING GLASS: The Life of Rainer Maria Rilke, by *Donald Prater*. Oxford University Press. $27.50.

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> Steel yourself now to the love, whatever its name, which can grant me *my* life. . . . For, if I were to give up all that is mine, and, as I often long to do, fall blindly into your arms and lose myself in them, then you would be holding one who has sacrificed himself: not me, not me. . . . I cannot dissemble, and cannot change myself. . . . I kneel in the world and implore forbearance from those who love me. May they spare me! not use me up for their own happiness, but help me to the unfolding of that solitary happiness but for whose great signs they would not have loved me.

So he described himself once to Lou Andreas-Salomé as forever "standing at the telescope, ascribing to every approaching woman a bliss which was certainly never to be found with any one of them: my own bliss, the bliss I once found in my most solitary hours." The pattern is established at age nineteen, on page 17 of this 470-page biography: "the initial attraction, often to someone older than himself and an artist, the temptation of a 'normal' life together, the conflict then between the life and his work, with sooner or later—and mostly sooner—the inevitable stern decision that his work must come first, and that he could realize what was in him only in solitude."

If Rainer Maria Rilke is beginning to sound like a supreme narcissist, that is in fact the impression created by Prater's biography—and quite deliberately: "Striving towards 'inwardness,' his poetry remains essentially personal and self-centred. . . . His letters, beneath the charm, the touches of humour, the empathy with his correspondent, and the philosophical flights, reveal the same eternal preoccupation with himself, his art, and his recurring existential crises. . . ." Early in life, not long after the extremely disagreeable (but not shattering, as he sometimes depicted it) military school experience, he made up his mind to live totally for his art. Many poets, many artists of all sorts, have made that Romantic resolution, only to be diverted; Rilke, though he loved to be surrounded by beautiful things, beautiful people, was essentially never diverted: he lived ruthlessly for poetry.

He felt not only that the women who attached themselves to him owed him love without requital; he felt as well that the prosaic world owed him the means of existence. He was marvelously lucky: the world responded. Besides the series of lovers, he rejoiced in a series of wealthy benefactors; occasionally the two were the same. After the early years of struggle and penury, the *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* years, his patrons provided him lodgings, sometimes sumptuous apartments on their estates, and the furnishings and servants to adorn them. Because the *Duino Elegies* are dedicated to her, everyone knows the name of the Princess Marie von Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe, chatelaine of the castle of Duino near Trieste, where the first three elegies were written in that solitude Rilke

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so desired and so seldom enjoyed; friend, confidante, discreet supplier of funds, and something approaching a mother-surrogate for Rilke, who "did not love" his mother back in Prague and seldom visited her. Less familiar is the name of Werner Reinhart, wealthy art patron, collector, and textile magnate, who made available the little "château" of Muzot in the Valais where the other elegies, and much other poetry, were composed. And there are numerous other greater and lesser Maecenases in the tale.

In the years after the war, his wealthy friends saw to it that the external conditions for writing were exactly as he prescribed. He had to have vegetarian meals, and that meant that he had to have a cook who knew how to prepare them. He had to have a stand-up desk; everywhere he lived, a new one was built to his measurements. It is easy to be impatient with Rilke's finicky requirements, until we realize that the "divine afflatus," the great bursts of inspiration that produced in a few days the *Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, for example, possessed him under these precise conditions.

He was luckiest of all in his publisher, Anton Kippenberg of Insel Verlag, a kind of German Maxwell Perkins, except that unlike Perkins at Scribner's, Kippenberg owned the establishment and could dispense advances and bonuses as he chose. For two decades Kippenberg nursed Rilke through depressions, crises, and bouts of accidie, kept his extravagant best-selling author (sales of the *Lay of the Life and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke*, a minor work which Prater thinks "verges on kitsch," reached 300,000 before Rilke's death in 1926, and passed the million mark in 1962) on a gradually augmented allowance, in marks, French or Swiss francs, or whatever currency was current with him, and came to the rescue munificently in countless desperate emergencies. It seems safe to say, though Prater doesn't quite say it, that Rilke's life and art would have been decidedly different in some indescribable way without the generosity of the Kippenbergs. Even his final struggle with leukemia and his death in an expensive Swiss sanatorium could not have been accomplished without the publisher's footing the bill.

II

"Unser Leben geht hin mit Verwandlung." "Life passes in transformation." For the poet, it was often like being at school, with tasks to perform and exams to undergo. During the war, after the failure of a love affair, he writes to Lou Salomé: "Now it's clear that this time I've failed the exam, that I'm not to be promoted and have to stay one more year in the same class of sorrow and start over again with the same words written up on the blackboard, whose dreary turn I thought I already had by heart." He retains into his forties the youthful impression that he is always getting ready, always re-

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hearsing for life, and one day will live it in reality: "It's like continually dressing and preparing for a part in a play while already on the stage with the curtain up" (from a letter of 1905). The role he is to play, of course, is that of the artist exclusively dedicated to his art; the exams he has to take are those set for him, first by a father unsympathetic to that goal, later, when he has flown the parental coop, by bourgeois society in general.

The history of his first thirty years, in fact, up until the period when he has begun to win an international reputation and to become the darling of his rich admirers, has a familiar ring. It is the archetypal portrait of the artist as young man, struggling for publication and recognition, fighting off middle-class constraints, managing to break away in travel to foreign climes—and, in Rilke's case, marrying too soon and regretting it almost immediately. (It is strange to think of the poet of the *Duino Elegies* as a grandfather, an art, he wrote, for which "j'ai peu de talent.")

After sampling the lively literary life of Munich and the delights of Italy, especially Florence, Rilke set out for Russia with the flamboyant, "liberated" former beloved of Nietzsche, Lou Andreas-Salomé, later a student of Freud and still later a practicing psychoanalyst, who was destined to be his lifelong friend and confidante. She was Russian-born and Russian-speaking and could open practically any door in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Notes Prater: "Though she was so much older than he, and in many ways more mature, it was in fact her first such experience" (of erotic love). Under her guidance Rilke met Tolstoy, Leonid Pasternak, and other writers and artists. He studied the language and immersed himself in everything Russian.

Russia was the first of his ardent enthusiasms; Sweden, where he came under the sway of the great feminist sociologist Ellen Key, was another; but much more durable and influential was the enthusiasm for Rodin. When Rilke first began to visit the venerable sculptor of Meudon and to prepare his monograph on him, Rodin had no German and Rilke's French was halting. (After long years in Paris, Rilke's French became fluent and supple, Gide and Valéry were his intimates and equals, and his short poems in French are among his masterpieces.) Nevertheless, the two hit it off; Rodin was obviously flattered by his adulation, and Rilke became his secretary for several years (struggling at first with the mountain of French correspondence, twice fired and twice rehired) and then his neighbor in the artists' and writers' colony of the Hôtel Brion. He wanted to work like Rodin, tirelessly all day long constructing artifacts; but poems were not solid like sculptures, and, depressed, he could only "wait quietly for the call." He never learned to work seriously "on demand," though he could rapidly turn out occasional verse, "offerings" as book inscriptions or gift cards, many of which have found their way into the Rilke canon.

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So he wandered: Spain, where Toledo's El Greco became another long-lasting enthusiasm; Provence; Italy again and North Africa and Egypt; Berlin and Munich and Vienna; back to Spain, back to France. During the war years he was called up but, through his influential connections, his service was brief and not arduous—the confiscation of his Paris apartment and the papers in it, those that Gide could not rescue, was about the most disastrous thing that happened to him. After the war, there were several retreats in Switzerland, Muzot the last and best. (Prater does not explain why he never returned to Schloss Duino.)

All this time he was writing letters, long letters, sometimes scores in one day. His industry in this department reminds one of Strindberg's. There are 50 volumes of Rilke's letters listed in Prater's bibliography, apparently with little replication: 12 volumes published by Insel Verlag covering the years 1899–1926, and then the books of letters to particular correspondents: the letters *an einen jungen Dichter*, the correspondence with Marie Taxis and with Lou Andreas-Salomé, the letters to André Gide, to Boris Pasternak, et al.

After each interruption of his nomadic life would begin "the slow process of reading and writing himself back into productivity, at least in the prose of innumerable letters." He wrote in 1919 to one of his legion of female admirers: "God knows why I maintain so many connections, sometimes I think it's a substitute for my homeland, as if this wide-ranging network of influences provides a sort of finely-spread 'being somewhere.'" The letters were for "the 'cause,' for that which is my work, in the end all my letters impart a vibration, a trace of its intensity."

Prater has been able to construct his biography, brick by brick as it were, from this enormously ramified correspondence, and from the memoirs left by numerous women who knew and loved Rilke, as well, of course, as from the usual kind of research. It does not appear to have required much digging, for through this mass of published material the details of Rainer Maria Rilke's life are easily assembled. This is not a Freudian or a Marxist or a hermeneutic or deconstructionist or semiotic or any kind of critical or interpretative biography: it is just an old-fashioned "Life," Prater says rather defensively, aiming "to give a portrait of the man and to show the background against which he wrote and the conditions in which his ideas were developed."

He cannot resist, nevertheless, offering a brief reading of the Elegies and a mention of the influence of psychoanalysis on the Third Elegy (about "the blood's hidden guilty river-god") and perhaps others, and adopts the general view of all the Elegies as a breakthrough from the Unconscious, a result of what Jung was so fond of calling (though this is not cited by Prater) an "abaissement du niveau mental." In spite of the influence of Lou Salomé, of all the interest in psychoanalysis among European intellectuals of the time,

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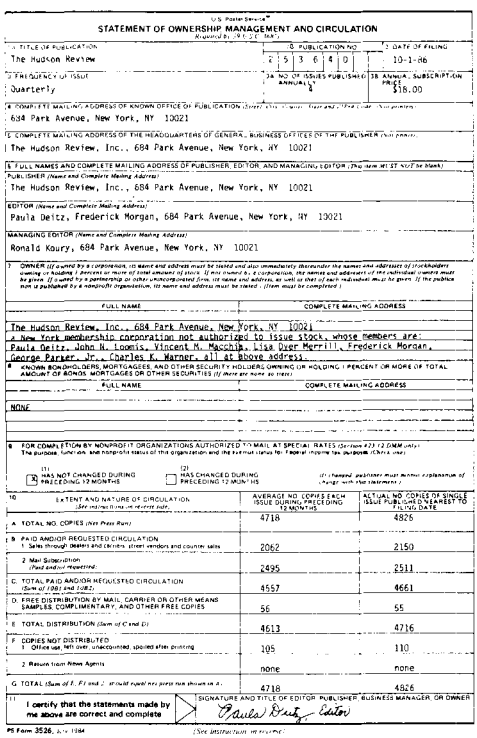
and of a pleasant evening spent with Freud, and in spite of recognizing the psychosomatic roots of his own illnesses, Rilke was a curious observer of the new science but not a "believer." He resisted all well-meaning attempts to get him into analysis. He said: "To vomit up scraps of childhood would be terrible for one whose call is not to resolve these problems within himself but essentially to exploit them. . . ."

This is the first full-fledged biography of Rilke in English since E.M. Butler's worthy *Rainer Maria Rilke* of 1941 (reprinted 1973). It is not a lively book; the dramatic moments of the poet's life, and there are many, are entered into the record in the same even, cautious, plain, flat, monotonous style as the housekeeping details. But by the time we are halfway through, we are caught up in the drama all the same, and Rilke's magic is working upon us.

Coming in the Spring 1987 issue of The Hudson Review: "Writer and Region" by Wendell Berry and "The Devil and American Epic" by John P. Sisk. Poems by A. R. Ammons and Joyce Carol Oates.



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ROBERT McDOWELL

New Schools & Late Discoveries

WHILE THE DEATH AGONY OF THE CONFESSIONAL LYRIC and the essay-as-poem continues to be well-documented in our literary journals, the most interesting experiments can be found in poetry by practitioners in the Neo-Narrative and New Formalist schools. A case can be made for all of the younger poets discussed here as contributing to the still-developing principles of one or both of these schools. The work by older poets reviewed here also indicates an exploratory return to the borders of formalism as well as a serious look into the possibilities of narrative. These developments reflect the desire to expand the vision of poetry and appeal to a larger audience.

I have long awaited the publication of Dana Gioia's first book.[1] Already well known for his essays, reviews, and translations, Gioia demonstrates in *Daily Horoscope* why he is much more than a primary example of a New Formalist. Whether he is writing in traditional forms or not (frequently, he employs them as launch pads from which he discovers new forms), he is a superb poet whose care in treating content, nuance, mood, and language comes through in every poem. Even on rare occasions when the writing seems almost to overwhelm the subject, the lines themselves are beautiful, isolated lessons in sensation and craft.

The book itself is also a lesson in assembling a volume of poetry. The first section introduces and develops the character of the stranger, as in "Eastern Standard Time," where a simple fact of change (the clocks moving back an hour) triggers a profound meditation on loneliness, on never feeling quite at home:

> Sometimes the saddest places in the world
> are just the ordinary ones seen after hours.

In "California Hills in August," the landscape symbolizes possibility, though "An Easterner, especially . . . would scorn / the meagerness of summer." Now living and working in the East, Gioia, a native Californian, makes much of the tension that is a result of becoming one's opposite. Thus the angst of the traveller is a symbol, perhaps,

[1]DAILY HOROSCOPE, by *Dana Gioia*. Graywolf Press. $15.00; $8.00.

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of the poet's own condition. It is a condition accented by disturbing dreams in which one might pause in a dark stairwell "to stroke the wall as if it were / some attendant beast"; it is a condition of acute watchfulness, one endured by an insomniac character who must listen to "the murmur of property . . . the moving parts about to come undone." Even a simple situation like waiting in an airport contains the weight and echo of an earlier era; we might wait in the lobby of the Grand Hotel where nothing ever happens because it is still "one entrance to so many worlds." As the section concludes with the tremendous descriptive detail of "In Cheever Country," we might feel that we have almost forgotten how to read the subtlety of a poet like this. On the commuter train, yet another mode of travel, the poet reminds us that a unique world exists outside if only the eye will see: "But here so little happens that is obvious." And this is revealed, with humility, through honorable questioning and testing. In contrast to the haunted protagonists of Eliot and Kees, who grappled with a world coming apart, Gioia's nameless characters struggle with anonymity and displacement in a world that is all-too-controlled.

The poet's grim resolution surfaces in the title sequence, which makes up section two:

> these walls, these streets
> this day can never be your home, and yet
> there is no other world where you could live,
> and so you will accept it.

Section three, then, explores acceptance. In "Pornotopia" the poet begins by acknowledging that "Everyone has an entrance of his own." But once we have passed through the outer rooms (constructed by our own artifice), "The interiors are always the same." In "My Secret Life," the poet extracts personal meaning from the word *pornography* and what is popularly referred to as "dark thoughts." The poem asserts that these private scenarios, if made public, would contradict all that others think of us and all that we say we are. Again, boundaries dissolve, distinctions blur. What are the consequences? The section concludes with "The End"—of the world. Fortunately, the end does not come before we have read "A Short History of Tobacco" (ending with a favored device, a weighty line that appeared earlier in the poem), and "The Mad Nun," the finest narrative poem in the book. In this traditional transformation story, the plot progressions and the language are especially precise.

The book's fourth section is prefaced by a phrase from Wallace Stevens, "an Italy of the mind," which suggests exotica and a symbolic return to the poet's European roots. The poems do not disappoint. The traveller exerts more control over The Journey, as reflected in "An Emigré in Autumn," a short shadow-syllabic poem

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that struggles toward the regularity beating through its last four lines. In this it mirrors the struggle of the narrator toward a vision that will please. Instead, in "Instructions for the Afternoon," the narrator faces this uncomfortable revelation:

> strange how all journeys come to this: the sun
> bright on the unfamiliar hills, new vistas
> dazzling the eye, the stubborn heart unchanged.

Even travel abroad inspires a chronicle of erasure. In "The Garden of the Campagna," our monuments and records are obliterated by time, and all that we do to set ourselves apart disappears, too. The poem ends by focusing on a half-blind old man. Though boys throw stones at him, "he will never leave, and there / is no one left who knows if he / was once the servant or the sire."

Finally, section five is also preceded by an unusually apt epigraph, this time from Borges: "Love and the imminence of love and the intolerable remembering." This closing, more personal section is notable for "His Three Women," several brief lyrics, a fine dramatic monologue, "The Room Upstairs," which echoes Frost, and "Four Speeches for Pygmalion," who wanted to carve "The face / of an eternal witness trapped in time."

Daily Horoscope, in the finest sense, represents the perfect synthesis of maker and object made. It would be specious to praise this volume as a first book. Gioia has given us a book that is more accomplished than recent publications by many more celebrated practitioners.

> The road winds over hills,
> gullies between fields,
> as we drive my mother's body
> back to the town
> where we were born,

So begins Mary Swander's second book.[2] Its poetry is narrative and dramatic, its situation clearly established from the outset. As the drive winds along, the narrator and her companion pass the time, not by listening to the radio (anything outside the closed cab of their shared memory is extraneous), but by swapping stories about grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins who have died. This is a book about process. Specifically, the reader is an enthralled backseat passenger, a witness to an archtypal journey, not back to the fearful side of origin—Death—but to the macabre, sustaining rituals we carry out in order to assuage our ambiguity concerning death.

[2]DRIVING THE BODY BACK, by *Mary Swander*. Alfred A. Knopf. $14.95;$8.95.

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The process we experience is the process of mourning, which may be the process of keeping the Dead alive by telling their stories over and over again.

Thus we become acquainted with Jim, a drifter who struck a bargain with the ghost of a murdered man and settled down to run a butchershop; George, who blew up the still and burned down the house; Julia, who died at age ten; Phil, a rumrunner whose death was a family mystery; Nell, who lived into her eighties, long enough to bury everyone; Maud, whose body was found "in her farmhouse, five or six dogs piled on top"; Doc, husband to Nell, who performed amputations in the field and died of stroke; Ed, a one-time legislator who filibustered for hours on the House floor by performing and identifying the calls of birds; Grandma, who died of heart failure in the cellar. We delight in marvelous anecdotes, uneasily read through detailed accounts of corpse preparation, and flash back so that the dead, alive again, may speak for themselves. This last device ought not to be confused with the dead speaking, for nowhere do Swander's narrator or characters presume to speak with authority on the spiritual atmosphere after death.

This refusal artificially to enhance the emotions of mourning mutes the elegiac tone we might expect in such material, but that is all to the good. Given the map of this book, conventional elegy would not hold our attention. In addition, Swander spurns lyrical effects. It would be difficult to call the reader's attention to a single lyrical passage because there are none. And they are not missed.

What we do find is a collection of characters who succeed in creating a *sense of a life* that is not wholly like our own. Their differences from and similarities to us are so perfectly balanced that we do not tire of them. Rather, we develop compassion for this cast whose members appear to exist primarily to negotiate death's aftermath. In doing so, perhaps we begin to feel compassion for each other and ourselves. This may be the ultimate reward for reading this obsessive book. I find that I return to its airtight world repeatedly, fascinated, repulsed, and won over again. I cannot wait to see where Mary Swander's vision will take us next.

The last twelve months might accurately be referred to as an extended season of the book-length narrative. Volumes by Frederick Turner, Daryl Hine, and Frederick Pollack have, with varied success, focused attention once again on a rich and neglected option in poetry.

In *Family History*,[3] Frederick Feirstein has written an autobiographical poem that attempts to "develop the characters of others" more fully than the conventional monodrama that is so much confessional poetry. In addition, he has molded the story into rhyming

[3]FAMILY HISTORY, by *Frederick Feirstein*. Quarterly Review of Literature (Poetry Series VII). Volume XXVI. $10.00p.

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sestets of iambic pentameter. This self-imposed gauntlet of intention and style is run with something lacking in most current poetry—great heart.

The poem is a "Testament of fact and fiction both" made by a father entering middle age for his young son. Thirty-two characters from four branches of the poet's family and in-laws enter and exit the stage of the poem. We begin with a tale of Polish Jews immigrating to New York's Lower East Side. Feirstein displays a compelling feel for the immigrant's saga, the nightmare and gilded dream of America. The family survives, endures anti-Semitism, and carves out *a place* in a new continent. It does so largely on the iron will of its women, who secure the home while the men struggle to find and keep work. Some succeed, some fail, but the Family goes on; all of its successes and failures imprint the poet. They leave him grappling with his own sense of identity. An Oedipal teen-years clash between the narrator, a repressed, passionate father, and domineering mother develops into a long-standing grudge, which is resolved only in the telling of the story itself:

> Except, I've learned whenever we rebel,
> We act out what our parents had to quell
> In them when they were young, and really miss
> That reckless self they lost through cowardice . . .

or later, when musing on what he might have been without a volatile family life, he concludes "God knows, wrecked."

This same wisdom touches the wife's genealogy and his courtship of her. In this sequence, especially, Feirstein's honesty is amazing. The wife-to-be is sent to France by a disapproving father in an effort to terminate what is, in his eyes, her unsavory relationship with the narrator. He is not successful, but the expatriate love affair includes riveting scenes of betrayal as well as reconciliation and tenderness.

This is the poet's ultimate accomplishment. Laboring in a tradition where many writers have given in to the seduction of the airbrushed portrait, Feirstein surprises us with psychodramatic facts that are almost unbearable in their irrefutability. He has taken a classic American myth—the immigrant's ordeal—and actually extended it in a form that is wholly appropriate to the task. In doing so, he has given us a complex chronicle of several generations' rites of passage. He has also guided his son to the gates of his own long journey:

> . . . But when you suffer fear, self-doubt
> From others' meanness, coldness, let this poem
> I've written through my dark night be a home
> For you. In this I've given you my soul,

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Your mother's too with her permission, blessing.
It's dawn and I must try to get some rest,
Some dreaming in, some natural repressing
Before you wake crying for Linda's breast,
Before my patients come up here to tell
Their family histories—their Heaven/Hell.

Another book-length poem, Mary Barnard's *Time and the White Tigress*,[4] has been stylishly produced by Breitenbush Books and efficiently illustrated with original linocuts by Anita Bigelow. The poem, nearly nine hundred lines, is divided into ten *fyttes* (from the German *fitze*, a skein of yarn), or cantos, and explores the ageless stories Man has invented to explain his dubious relationship with Time and the Heavens.

"Why should we cease to make myths?" Barnard asks more than once. Her answer is to retell, from our contemporary, clinical viewpoint, the astronomical speculations of Dante, Mohammed, the Mayas, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Pliny, and Yeats. As she explains in her notes following the poem, these excerpts concerning "the ancient sky-watchers" are exceptions to her method, which is to limit herself "to descriptions of phenomena visible to the naked eye." Thus the history of Man becomes the history of our endless efforts to reduce celestial progressions to miniatures.

Nothing persists in the face of time and its flux
like the cultural off-shoots of time—calendar customs.

Our history becomes the history of counting.

This is a didactic book, but its lecture is delightful. Interweaving the stuff of myth ("Here is the calendar-priest with his stake and his string") with the stuff of science ("Eclipses . . . occur on the lunar nodes"), Barnard infuses this popular, though often debased, discussion with a considered sense of history. This is the difficult seal the discriminating reader must discover and decode before making a commitment to such a book. Its impression is nowhere more evident than in the restraint Barnard exercises when breaking her myths and tales with the periodic passages of observed natural phenomena. These prosaic intervals do not weigh the poem down; merely functional, they perform their function then disappear, bridging us into the next mythic progression.

In bestowing the 1986 Western States Book Award on *Time and the White Tigress*, the jury panel noted its example "of a time-honored but recently little-practiced genre, the essay-in-verse." This somewhat misrepresents the book, but I will not long digress here

[4]TIME AND THE WHITE TIGRESS, by *Mary Barnard*. Breitenbush Books. $20.00.

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to prove it. The essay-in-verse is still the dominant American poem, though the New Formalism, and the resurgence of narrative, especially, have significantly eroded its sea wall. The typical lyric poet who is driven to try something new almost always ends by writing meditations or essays-in-verse. As the lyric wanes, so will the essay-in-verse, and that is our current condition.

Our awareness of the unfortunate progression of singing to explaining has long been with us. Recently, some have discovered storytelling as a fecund alternative. Mary Barnard, who has lived long enough never to have forgotten it, yokes her lyric and didactic flourishes to the engine of myths and tales that drives the book. Would that more practitioners of the essay-in-verse could do the same. "Why should we cease to make myths?" They help us pass the time, and they make us feel more alive:

> we all know about Stonehenge, and mainly
> we know we know nothing; and having said that,
> we all leap in and start guessing. Why not?

Why not, indeed.

Vikram Seth's widely acclaimed *The Golden Gate*[5] is another bold attempt to resurrect the verse narrative and combine Neo-Narrative and New Formalist techniques. Employing the "Eugene Onegin" stanza of Pushkin, Seth tells the story of five young friends who are making it in the Yuppie Land of San Francisco.

John, the central character, works for a defense contracting firm and feels lonely. Unable to shake this mood, he turns to his old girlfriend, Janet Hayakawa, for advice. Janet, a struggling sculptor and drummer for Liquid Sheep, a rock band, encourages her ex to run an ad in a Personals column. John dismisses the suggestion, but Janet composes the ad and runs it anyway. The responses are many, and John reluctantly contacts three women. The first two meetings are disastrous, but on the third date he meets and is enchanted by Liz Dorati, a San Francisco lawyer. The rising action of their relationship culminates in a housewarming party at which Phil, a former classmate and associate of John's, meets Ed, Liz's younger brother. Phil, who is divorced and has a young son, and Ed fall in love. This relationship is beached by Ed's periodic "godly mood," which leads him into self-chastisement for his homosexuality. The relationship ends, as does John's with Liz, and in a cumbersome plot twist Phil proposes to Liz:

> . . ."Liz, don't joke. I'm serious."
> "So am I, Phil—I like you too—
> You're stimulating, unimperious . . .

[5]THE GOLDEN GATE, by *Vikram Seth*. Random House. $17.95.

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What's more, you've opened up my view
To the whole world . . . And I'd far rather
Marry a man who's a good father
Than someone . . . I too don't feel sure
I can trust passion anymore . . ."

Another factor works to enlist Liz's consent. Her mother, dying of cancer, would love to have a grandchild. Liz and Phil are married and waste little time producing a son. Meanwhile, an embittered John seeks solace in Janet; eventually, their romance is rekindled. All seems well, but on the evening of John's opportunity to reconcile with Liz and Phil (an opportunity manipulated by Janet), Janet is killed in a traffic accident. Months pass, John suffers. Finally, the surviving friends reconcile and life goes on.

The problems of *The Golden Gate* are not confined to this thin plot. One needn't question the vision here, but one must question the execution. Characters are one-dimensional, seeming much the same at the end of the story as when they first appear. Janet is a schemer, John an aggressive prude. Both are self-centered, but not depressingly so—because we do not care enough about them. Liz and Phil are run-of-the-mill pragmatists, and Ed, who keeps a pet iguana, is unbelievable in his struggle with eroticism and religion.

Another problem exists in the way plot is developed. In fact, very little really *happens* in the 307 pages of *The Golden Gate*. Characters are brought together to eat, talk, and go to bed, and they usually talk about eating, talking, and going to bed. There *are* a few *scenes*—an anti-nuclear rally, an olive-picking excursion—but these really are occasions for more conversation. More lightweight, tiring conversation.

It is not in the talk alone that the verse itself should be called into question. The passage quoted earlier represents a recurrent inability, on the poet's part, to manipulate the form he has chosen. Variations in the metrical line occur repeatedly without reason; lines of dialogue are frequently strained beyond justification; what is meant to be idiomatic lacks an identifiable idiom; rhymes, occasionally witty, are just as occasionally dicey.

The problem of verse, specifically, might have been largely eradicated had the text been severely edited (Pushkin limited himself to 400 stanzas, Seth extended himself through 590). The problems with plot and character are so severe that no editing could solve them. *The Golden Gate*, though an admirable effort, fails because the story was not better, the wit wittier. The New Formalism and the Neo-Narrative thrive, but neither one is showcased in this book.

The jacket copy of James Cummins' *The Whole Truth*[6] calls it a verse narrative, too. This handsomely designed book consists of twenty-four

[6]THE WHOLE TRUTH, by *James Cummins*. North Point Press. $11.95.

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sestinas dealing with the Perry Mason cast of characters. Though there is little of a narrative line linking the segments together, the zest and wit with which Cummins executes is undeniable. Employing the slap-in-the-face metaphors of detective fiction, Cummins invents a fly whose roll and patter recalls John Berryman's Henry, reveals Della Street's affair with foot fetishist Hamilton Burger, Paul Drake's endless on-the-road attempts to uncover valuable evidence, and Perry Mason's institutional recovery from a breakdown. But it is not so much what the characters do as *how* the poet tells it. In sestina three, Burger, presenting his case, seems to Della "a high priest at his altar." His eloquence is seductive.

> When Della came to, Burger was sucking her toes. "A chance
> Encounter?" she murmured. He leaped, red-faced, to the light
> Switch. "Fall in me from a great height," she moaned.

In sestina four the focus shifts to Mason:

> "Perry—" Furious, Mason looked up from the chess
> -Game he played with himself every night. His mother
> Loomed in the doorway, leaning grimly on her walker.
> "Perry, turn up the heat? Please? Your father—"
> "—Is dead!" Perry raged, his bitter voice rammed
> Into the old crone's face. "If you were ambulatory—"

The sestinas shift back and forth like this between attractively sordid eroticism and brutal, almost surreal, probes of the self. This peeling back the skin of identity and desire is disturbing, but it is entertaining, too. Adjectives like *steamy* and *sizzling* are not inappropriate when describing *The Whole Truth*. The book is a good example of contemporary poetry's effort to take back much of what it gave up to prose forms so long ago. It also suggests, in a way that is much more convincing than *The Golden Gate*, the bright possibilities when the Neo-Narrative and the New Formalism intersect.

It is not often that a reviewer, who is always right, gets the opportunity to admit, in print, that he has been wrong. *The Happy Man*,[7] Donald's Hall's eighth volume of poetry and his first since *Kicking the Leaves* (1978), presents me with such an opportunity. In another magazine several years ago, I badly misjudged the latter volume by inappropriately fitting it to an argument against personality in poetry. I forgot that all books put forth their own arguments, that it is the reviewer's reponsibility to allow his response to come from them—not the other way around. Since then I have read *Kicking the Leaves* many times; where once I saw failure I see breakthrough. I

[7]THE HAPPY MAN, by *Donald Hall*. Random House. $7.95p.

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state this now because the current volume so beautifully extends the themes of its predecessor.

Donald Hall has always been a poet willing to hazard change. At various times he has been a formalist, a surrealist, an advocate of the deep image. Since 1978, he has labored in what I can only call his mature style. The above interests are present still, but they are elements of an ambitious style that is alternately dramatic, narrative, and sometimes both.

The twenty-two poems in *The Happy Man* have the weight of history on them and about them. The narrator, home again on rural ancestral ground, everywhere sees the past in the present, inevitable decay and regeneration in the cycle of seasons and work. "The cows in their house / decree the seasons," and later, "They are long dead; they survive, in the great day / of August, to convene afternoon and morning / for milking." Poem after poem creates a memorable *place*. They deftly balance past and present, speculating and summing up with tenderness, allowing the dead to speak for themselves. Their dominant subjects are desire and endurance; poems from the book's final section ("Sisters") pay homage to the historical role women have played in keeping family, or the sense of it, together.

The book's finest achievement, though, is the blockbuster "Shrubs Burned Away." This seventeen-page poem, actually the first of a projected three-part poem, is a series of anecdotes and confessions from childhood through adulthood. These scenes reconstruct the map of getting what one wants. It is impossible to suggest the strength of this poem with a brief quote, but I will offer the following:

> I am very happy. I dance supine on my bed laughing
> until four in the morning, when the bottle is empty
> and the liquor store closed on Hollywood and La Brea.
> I must not drive the car for cigarettes;—
> therefore I lurch a mile to the All-Nite Laundro-Mart
> and falter back coughing. In the morning I lie
> waking dozing twisted in the damp clothes
> of lethargy, loathing, and the desire to die.
> My father's head shakes like a plucked wire.
> Never do anything except what you want to do.

The last line is a quote from father to son delivered years earlier. Elsewhere, other characters speak for themselves; gradually all of them face it that in doing what one wants, it is difficult *to know* what it is that one really wants.

"Repose," claims the epigraph from Meister Eckhart preceding the book's final section. With difficult emotional honesty, Hall makes flesh of the perpetual struggle toward repose that involves all of us. This book represents the finest work of his life in poetry.

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The same thing might be said of Adrienne Rich's *Your Native Land, Your Life*,[8] for it signifies that she now commands a poetry, and politics, that is far beyond diatribe and factionalism. It is the poetry and politics of serviceable dissent. As this spiritual travelogue develops, the narrator confronts old ghosts and a nation "frozen in the ice." Fundamental questions recur: How does one live? What does one do? How does one effectively channel anger into reconstruction? What is one to make of a world "where so much is possible" though "the homeless line for bread"? In "Yom Kippur—1984," spinning off epigraphs from Robinson Jeffers and Leviticus, Rich tests the impulse to withdraw against the individual's responsibility to the tribe. It is significant that Jeffers' presence lingers throughout the poem. Identified with bitterness and aggressive isolation, the Jeffers example is met with spirited opposition.

How is this opposition stated? The poet displays an uncanny ability to know when an image or supporting detail has done its work. The poem begins with a rhetorical stanza, then moves into a stanza establishing setting. The place is California, specifically the coastal region on the continent's edge that has come to be known as Jeffers Country. Then the poem abruptly expands, imposing a painful but enduring historical perspective:

> the pick-up with a gun parked at a turn-out in Utah or the
> Golan Heights
> is not what I mean
> the poet's tower facing the western ocean, acres of forest planted to
> the east, the woman reading in the cabin, her
> attack dog suddenly risen
> is not what I mean

These lines work because they force us to see fear and suffering on a wide scale. Only a poet like Rich, who has wrestled the burden of history to a draw, is capable of such moments.

In another example, "Education of a Novelist," Rich inventively alternates italicized lines from Ellen Glasgow's autobiography, *The Woman Within*, and straight lines of direction. Gradually, dramatically, the two voices merge on the page. In the poem's fourth section, the voice identifies the citizen in the individual and confronts "The growing suspicion / haunting the growing life / *the sense of exile in a hostile world*." This talent for speaking as a citizen in a hostile world is essential bravery.

> I have been too close to septic too many times
> to play with either violence or non-violence.

[8]YOUR NATIVE LAND, YOUR LIFE, by *Adrienne Rich*. W.W. Norton. $6.95p.

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So writes Rich in the long sequence "Contradictions: Tracking Poems." There is nothing flippant or propagandistic about this book. Most other contemporary books of poetry seem trivial by comparison.

The poems in Chase Twichell's second book[9] resemble those from her first (*Northern Spy*) in that they attempt to mitigate against conditions in which "words also fall / across enormous blackness," in which "The verb *abandon* / tips on the fulcrum / of its double meaning," in which "love of the world / is love of the ruin." The mood is paradox, the atmosphere willed isolation. *Abandon*, with its double implication of refusal and wanton consent, may be the essential Twichell verb. To go with the flow or resist it, to understand the mind and the heart and choose to follow one or the other according to situation—these are the principal concerns in Twichell's work. Her method is didactic, her best subject the mind itself. Even when she makes metaphor of the heart, it is the mind's perception she is speaking of. For her, "the mind / must renounce / the form that contains it" or stand "opposed to the / starry, immortal flood."

This debate is most developed in three memorable long poems. "My Ruby of Lasting Sadness" explores lost love and memory. "A Suckling Pig" is almost severe in its aggressive indictment of how men and women use each other. The most narrative of these poems, it tells the story of Jerome, a painter who stages an elaborate bachelor party to celebrate "his fortieth year, / his rocketing fame, and his divorce." "Pure pariahs," the poet calls them after they have drunk, after they have enjoyed the videos and the strippers from Springfield. The disintegration of compassion and civil conduct is appalling but seems true. Finally, "The Odds" deals with the intricate, inevitable gamble one must surrender to if one will realize desire. It is a lovely piece of writing that succeeds in reconciling the concerns raised in the preceding long poems.

But overall, in Twichell's poetry neither lessons nor songs enthrall us most. Rather, it is precision, a commodity presumed present in every good poem but lamentably rare in the poetry of any historical moment. In observation, in phrasing, and in emotional honesty, precision is so much *in* Twichell's work that it carries us over the hurdle of agreement and makes palatable the hard edges, the tone that is almost cold. Such precision enables a reader like myself to overcome opposition to an underlying inflexibility that is grating and inviting at the same time. Whether we agree with the poet or not, we listen and ponder in a way we do not when reading a didactic poet who has failed to master argument and expression. As when reading Mary Swander, one gets the feeling that one is on the verge of something here, some new mode of expression we shall

[9]THE ODDS, by *Chase Twichell.* University of Pittsburgh Press. $15.95; $6.95.

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find necessary in the coming decades. For now, Twichell's vision is as striking as a new pair of red boots on a river's muddy bank.

Gail Mazur is an observer of minute detail in the Dickinsonian tradition. *The Pose of Happiness*[10] begins dramatically with a family surveying the charred ruins of their home. Noting the grotesque remnants, the narrator speculates: "Better if it had vanished completely, / the fairy tale where I make one greedy wish / too many: *to have things just as they were*—". Most of the following thirty-six poems attempt just this kind of resurrection. Called back are a father—"a lone fisherman . . . rowing in with his catch of perch"—a mother whose "friends sprawled / gratefully on the porch," and a house that "held us so, we broke apart, / . . . in a fury of independence." Called back are a series of anecdotes, like the razing of the water tower, the startling discovery that it was "littered with squirrel skeletons," and the memory of the young poet bringing her grandfather tall, cold glasses of water from it:

> "Mashpee wine," he called it.
>
> Was it the drowned animals
> that made it so delicious?

This tender, unexpected, inquiring wit is an example of Mazur at her best, and it is this tenderness that enables this book to carve out its special niche in the post-*Life Studies* tradition.

As with Robert Lowell, the weight of the past for Mazur is heavy. It is also seductive, as much to be wished for as to be wished away. For if we cannot ever adequately name the indices of survival, can we not name the bits of evidence it is our privilege to collect as we pass through life? Mazur responds affirmatively to this question by naming the scenes in old snapshots and restoring context to fragmented memories. Concurrently, she exposes the mythic wish, attainment, and frustration behind American leisure. Even the acquisition of the summer house on the Cape will not hold off those unwanted guests, Surprise and Loss.

A number of elegiac books with similar concerns populate contemporary poetry. This is so, in part, because the subject of lost family and friends, of time passing, is important. The subject presents a sturdy symbol for the poet who would employ the personal in order to examine the larger community. Though *the personal* swallows most poets, Mazur is an exception.

> Cold air, I'll learn to love you yet,
> shake memory back to its place
> so I can straighten up.

[10]THE POSE OF HAPPINESS, by *Gail Mazur*. David Godine. $8.95p.

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She is able to imagine community, the world around her, and express a coherent, simple wish. It is one that was shared by William Butler Yeats:

> And may these characters remain
> when all is ruin once again.

The last three volumes discussed here are by English poets.

"I began to go to Southwark Cathedral in the late sixties." So begins a note by the English poet, Herbert Lomas, which follows his fifty-two poems making up the sequence *Letters in the Dark.*[11] Later, he makes clear that though the number of "items" equals the weeks of the year, he has avoided "the temptation to fit the whole poem into an arbitrary plan . . . following instead an intuitive plan corresponding to how things happen in the mind at moments during celebration." This is a harrowing and ambitious task. An American reader, used to a diet of agnosticism and fuzzy primitivism, will be surprised by a refreshing lack of flippancy as Lomas' investigation confronts the essential question: What face do we look into when we would face Belief?

Generally, the investigation is carried out in a subtle, quirky pentameter line; rhymes are effortlessly effective; the versatile narrator moves back and forth between first- and third-person and first-person plural; birds (crows, pelicans, swans) are favored symbols of Man in his various guises. The world is *in* the author, surely. Even the most unpromising situation yields revelation. For example, in poem XIX, the narrator ponders releasing a fly beating against the window in his study. He grants the fly its wish. As he raises the window and the fly departs, he notes that the cold outside will soon kill it. The implication is clear: isn't this how God conducts himself with us?

But it is not God only who is master of the unconscious give-and-take that is living and dying. In another poem (V), the narrator concludes:

> Swans love with inseparable love, and so our birdselves go
> Treading the water, not knowing on whom we feed.

Our sin teaches confusion. To wrestle with it may be all that God asks of us. Lomas' peculiar interpretation of communion allows for an edgy co-existence between doubt and acceptance. On the one hand, Lomas seems to suggest that by ingesting the body, by performing a blessed-debased act, we may be capable of humility and

[11]LETTERS IN THE DARK, by *Herbert Lomas.* Oxford University Press. $7.95p.

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acceptance; on the other "Christ's Mass / Invites the knower to be dubious. / It's our goodness and our knowledge he can't use."

What face do we look into? The congregation supplies one collective visage.

> We meet again at the kneeling place . . .
> Grace whispers grace
> To his own face
> Through all these faces.

The face of the ever-changing self provides another. It is this insatiable, complex questioner who is capable of asserting that "Jesus was naive" while countering with this:

> The Mother will lean one night by the cot of dread
> For my sensible eyes to close in sedative calm
> And the moment when I perceive who I really am.

This ability *to see* and articulate opposing views as they do battle on the plain of one man's psyche makes Lomas a valuable witness. Though "All thoughts are parrots, pretty mocking birds," we can do no less than honor their mounting a stay against loneliness, confusion, and desertion.

Another worthwhile volume is *Two-Headed Monster*[12] by C. B. Cox, the critic, scholar, editor of *Critical Quarterly*, and Professor of English at the University of Manchester.

The same reticence that led this poet to postpone publication of his first book until 1981 can be detected in the current volume. According to the jacket copy, it includes "the best work from the earlier volume and new poems." The thirty-four poems are divided into five sections: *War Poems*, *Indian Poems*, *Education*, *People and Places*, and *Marriage Poems*. The method is descriptive. Sections two and four chronicle the poet's extensive travels; the third section focuses on the poet's occupation.

In virtually every poem, the speaker is a man apart, a mostly reconciled but quietly vocal outsider who *experiences* observation. By looking intently, he bècomes a player in the scene he describes. Yet the speaker's presence in the poem is understated. This is rare, especially since we have grown used to the scene in a poem evaporating altogether as the speaker's presence grows ever larger. Cox earnestly sidesteps this fashionable pit.

Most often he manages this by summoning up a fine wit. Occasionally satiric, it usually impresses because of its odd tenderness. In

[12]TWO-HEADED MONSTER, by *C. B. Cox*. Carcanet. $8.50p.

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"Interlude at Recanati," the Germans have been driven back by heavy shelling. The next morning, the poet-soldier enters the town to visit "Leopardi's shuttered palace." The war retreats among Leopardi's manuscripts and ornate chair, but when the guide brings a guest book the poet snaps back to the present:

> Dated three days before I read
> Oberleutnant Woltersheim.
>
> A man I might have liked to dine
> and talk of Leopardi's verse—
> perhaps we killed him yesterday.

But the best examples, and the strongest work in the volume, may be found in the *Education* and *Marriage Poems* sections. In the former, the poet daily comes to terms with a life in which "Duty . . . settles like a curse" and a hippy student in Colorado, reading the poet's verse, encourages him "to join the living flow / . . . You English need more light." The five poems in this section succeed, as few poems do, in rendering Academia as *a workplace* rather than a closeted assembly of self-congratulatory argument and doubletalk.

The latter section begins with a commemoration of the poet's silver wedding anniversary. The couple goes to a nude beach where the poet marvels at this gift, a "rich variety of breasts." Later, husband and wife swim far out past the rafts and bathers. From the shore they might appear to be

> a two-headed monster,
> four eyes bobbing above the waves,
> yet at this vantage point
> we command perfect landscape.

The wish to command a perfect landscape is present everywhere in this volume. Cox's expression of this wish is a model of focused restraint and control.

In closing, I am delighted to call attention to the work of a poet who died in 1832. *Selected Poetry*[13] by George Crabbe has just been published by Michael Schmidt's Carcanet Press. The edition includes a bibliography, a useful introduction by editor Jem Poster, and selections from five of the poet's major collections: "The Village," "The Parish Register," "The Borough," "Tales," and "Tales of the Hall."

Throughout his career, Crabbe labored to tell, with punishing fidelity, the stories of the seafaring people in and around Aldeburgh

[13]SELECTED POETRY, by *George Crabbe,* edited by *Jem Poster.* Carcanet. $7.50p.

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(Suffolk) and other English villages. As with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the sea, provider and ominous judge, washes every passage of Crabbe's poetry. Few poets have so well created an unforgettable setting, but Crabbe's genius is most apparent in his development of character and shifting perspective. Crabbe's people are among the most memorable characters ever created in poetry.

In "The Village: Book I," Crabbe's attempt to strip away the pastoral idealism of Oliver Goldsmith's celebrated "Deserted Village" is chillingly successful.

> Here joyless roam a wild amphibious race,
> With sullen wo display'd in every face;
> Who, far from civil arts and social fly,
> And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.

Here are the rural poor, "wand'ring long, amid these frowning fields," victims of the sea "whose greedy waves devour the lessening shore" or "sweeps the low hut and all it holds away." Here are the children succumbing to poverty and disease; here are stories that cannot be suffered easily. In book-length poem after book-length poem, we follow the complex accounts of failed business ventures, ruined women, and marriages gone bad. We hear the rationalizations of slum lords, of the parish clerk whose tyrannical pride turns to extinguishing humility when it is revealed that he has stolen church money meant for the poor. Here also is Crabbe's most famous story, the tale of the fisherman, Peter Grimes. When the neighbors hear the cries of his beaten servant boys, they are inclined to say that "Grimes is at his exercise."

"Nature's sternest painter, yet the best." So said Lord Byron of Crabbe. Had the poet lived in our time, he would still be an individual cutting against the grain of what is *acceptable* in poetry. With his eye like a subjective camera, Crabbe might have been a superb film director; he certainly would have been *the master* of the Neo-Narrative in poetry. That is his value to us now, if only we have the patience, intelligence, and grit to read him.

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HAROLD FROMM

Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un Man of Letters?

LIKE THE PERENNIALLY MORIBUND BUT NEVER-QUITE-DEAD NOVEL, the man of letters is a genus always on the verge of extinction but never quite extinct. In his celebrated book on the subject, John Gross, tracing the man of letters from the eighteenth century to the modern period, sees him as a changing phenomenon that—whatever its current form in the twentieth century—is nevertheless antiquated and obsolete. Yet if we think of this literary personage as a principally non-academic writer on literature and culture, we can come up with a fairly formidable roster of present-day survivors: Joseph Epstein, Gore Vidal, Elizabeth Hardwick, Joan Didion, Stephen Spender, Joyce Carol Oates, Leon Edel and V. S. Pritchett, to mention just a few. Although some of these have had part- or full-time academic connections, we think of them as essentially non-academic. Unlike literary scholars from universities, who are apt to write principally for the *MLA Bibliography* rather than for living, sentient consciousnesses, men and women of letters seem really to live in and through the written word, with an addiction to people and to life itself. Human culture is their thing and their métier has even sometimes been called "humane letters."

Consider, for example, the following passage about the scene in *Wuthering Heights* in which Cathy is bitten by the Lintons' bulldog, Skulker:

> "Look . . . how her foot bleeds," Edgar Linton exclaims, and "She may be lamed for life," his mother anxiously notes. Obviously such bleeding has sexual connotations, especially when it occurs in a pubescent girl. Crippling injuries to the feet are equally resonant, moreover, almost always signifying symbolic castration, as in the stories of Oedipus, Achilles, and the Fisher King. Additionally, it hardly needs to be noted that Skulker's equipment for aggression—his huge purple tongue and pendant lips, for instance—sounds extraordinarily phallic. In a Freudian sense, then, the imagery of this brief but violent episode hints that Catherine has been simultaneously catapulted into adult female sexuality *and* castrated.

This screamingly funny bit of camp, far from being a *jeu d'esprit*, is a not so unrepresentative specimen of high academic seriousness.

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No person of letters could possibly have produced such a thing, thoughts at once so grotesque and so hackneyed, so dominated by institutional imperatives. Certainly not Pritchett.

Born in 1900, V.S. Pritchett is now a Venerable. His two volumes of autobiography, *A Cab at the Door* and *Midnight Oil*, give us sufficient—if not deeply explored—personal background so that we can see where he has come from. Unlike the academic critic, whose career from college to Ph.D. to teaching is paradigmatic, Pritchett did not even enter the university, let alone get a degree. His early schooling was erratic and serendipitous, and though he was a poor student, he made use of everything. It all became equipment for living—and writing. At one school he had a teacher who used no textbooks, just copies of Ford Madox Ford's *English Review*. To Pritchett, it did no harm: "One had thought literature was in books written by dead people who had been oppressively over-educated. Here was writing by people who were alive and probably writing at this moment." But his father, an unstable and histrionic Christian Scientist, decided on a whim that Victor had had enough schooling and should be sent off to work. In the leather trade, photography, journalism, and whatnot, he picked up his culture through wide experience in the world and wide reading of literary works. And in the course of his travels for *The Christian Science Monitor*, he met famous writers at the same time he was immersing himself in contemporary literature. During a sojourn in Ireland, he encountered most of the Yeats circle and visited Yeats himself at home: "It was a Georgian house, as unlike a hut of wattle in a bee-loud glade as one could imagine."

> It is a choking and confusing experience to meet one's first great man when one is young. These beings come from another world, and Yeats heightened that effect. . . . Yeats came down the stairs toward me, and the nearer he came the further away he seemed. His air was birdlike, suggesting one of the milder swans of Coole and an exalted sort of blindness. . . . He was the only man I have ever known whose natural speech sounded like verse.

After years of precarious penury, Pritchett became the fiction reviewer for *The Spectator*. "And so I became a literary journalist of highbrow tastes who lives in the country because it is cheap and who divides his time between reviewing and doing 'his own work.' In the country one is outside literary circles, and I have rarely been intimately connected with them."

As an unaffiliated autodidact from a rich mix of Yorkshire and London/suburban relations, many of whom were classic English eccentrics, Pritchett has given us a varied and immense output of stories, novels, travel books, biography, and literary criticism. But for criticism, this sort of background can be a mixed blessing, though

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that is not to say that unmixed blessings are so easy to come upon. T. S. Eliot, for example, was certainly not one of them, but as an earlier man of letters with a different kind of background he produced critical essays whose focus and toughness have exerted an influence that Pritchett's do not appear to share. The reason becomes apparent after a reading of this new volume.

A Man of Letters: Selected Essays[1] consists of forty-six critical essays and reviews from *The New Statesman*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Review of Books*, covering a period from 1939 to 1984. Some of these pieces have already been collected in earlier volumes. In his introduction, Pritchett attempts to place himself within English writing:

> If, as they say, I am a Man of Letters I come, like my fellows, at the tail-end of a long and once esteemed tradition in English and American writing. We have no captive audience. We do not teach. We are rarely academics though we owe a great deal to scholars. We earn our bread and butter by writing for the periodicals that have survived. If we have one foot in Grub Street we write to be readable and to engage the interest of what Virginia Woolf called 'the common reader'. We do not lay down the law, but we do make a stand for the reflective values of a humane culture.

These are claims both reasonable and just: the essays and reviews are nothing if not readable and engaging. There is no academic jargon, no trendy ideology, no overriding program. Rather, a sponge-like openness to experience, a bristling wit, a keen responsiveness to the complexities of life and art. A reader who cannot engage with at least some of these essays should be left to heaven. The essays fall into two categories: shorter reviews that hover around a biography or critical monograph about a novelist, and longer essays that retrospect a major component of a writer's oeuvre. Even the briefer pieces escape the narrow confines of the books that generated them. What permeates all is a style of prose and a style of mind, a style of someone who seems to have read every novel ever written, to have visited every worthwhile place, to have experienced the ambience that suffuses European and American cultures. The prose has the directness and rhetorical flourish of spoken but elegant delivery. Of Trollope he remarks, "He grew worldliness like a second skin over the raw wounds of youth, and the reason why he describes what is normally observable about people so well, is that he longed merely for the normal." On the other hand, in his novels "the sense of danger and extremity which alerts us in the war-like

[1] A MAN OF LETTERS: Selected Essays, by *V. S. Pritchett*. Random House. $19.95.

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compositions of Jane Austen, is dulled." Of Waugh, "His early books spring from the liberating notion that human beings are mad; the war trilogy, a work of maturity, draws on the meatier notion that the horrible thing about human beings is that they are sane." And of Waugh's satire: "One glance at the English upper classes, imposing their private fantasies on whatever is going on, treating everything from war downwards as if it were all happening in one of their country houses, has been enough to provide comedians with material for a lifetime." In the essay on Max Beerbohm, he relishes telling us that "one understands the point of Oscar Wilde's question: he asked a lady whether Max ever took off his face and revealed his mask. Max had no face; or if he did have one it was as *disponible*, as blank as an actor's is." Though a great deal of the wit in these essays is devastatingly on target, much is brilliant irrespective of its truth—the brilliance coming from the sheer fact of saying such things. We can see from this style how much Pritchett has been influenced by Samuel Butler, Wilde, and their imitators. He is a descendant of truth-speaking English Eccentricity.

Through many of these shorter pieces, some of which are very finely wrought, one begins to sense Pritchett's principal limitation as critic: the lack—or understatement—of an organizing theme or position in the individual essays and a more general lack of critical stance, point of view, or programmatic scaffolding behind his work as a whole. The shorter pieces are so compressed, so bristling with throwaway epigrams and disarming insights that one can imagine twenty unwritten essays underlying each written one. Pritchett himself has described his years spent mastering the art of compression for limited journal space and one often feels that he has mastered this art only too well. Although a more generalized critical program could for the most part be dispensed with, more repetition and development of key ideas would flesh out these shorter pieces, give them a focus that is not always apparent, and thereby fix them more distinctly in the reader's mind and sensibility.

There is, however, a group of longer, denser essays—on Scott, Eliot, Trollope, and Conrad—in which greater ruminatory space and a more amply woven texture have enabled Pritchett to underscore his point of view and his organizing themes more tellingly. These essays seem less tied to reviewing than to the act of reconsidering a novelist or his work. But one notable exception to this pattern must be remarked: the short essay on Mark Twain is one of the volume's very best. Focussing on *Huckleberry Finn* as Twain's greatest achievement, the essay surprises us with its boldness.

> After reading Hemingway and Faulkner and speculating upon the break of the American novel with its English tradition, we go back to the two decisive, indigenous Americans who opened the new vein—Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe. Everything really

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> American, really non-English comes out of that pair of spiritual derelicts, those two scarecrow figures with their half-lynched minds. Both of them, but particularly Twain, represent the obverse side of Puritanism. We have never had this obverse in England, for the political power of Puritanism lasted for only a generation and has since always bowed if it has not succumbed to civilized orthodoxy. If an Englishman hated Puritanism, there was the rest of the elaborate English tradition to support him; but American Puritanism was totalitarian and if an American opposed it, he found himself alone in the wilderness with nothing but bottomless cynicism and humorous bitterness for his consolation.

Pritchett sees *Huckleberry Finn* as Twain's one moment of maturity. "When Mark Twain turned upon the religion of his childhood because it was intolerable, he was unaware that it would destroy him by turning him into a money-grubber of the most disastrously Puritan kind. . . . Out of the mess which Twain made of his life, amid the awful pile of tripe which he wrote, there does arise one book which has the serenity of a thing of genius." Written in 1941, the essay goes on to trace the moral and esthetic accomplishments of that work. It is a classic account of *Huckleberry Finn*.

The exploration of Scott is also a rich accomplishment. First we are told about Scott's limitations:

> At sixteen we are in love with those sexless heroines with their awful school-mistressy speech. We are in love with those stick-in-the-mud heroes whose disinterestedness and honour pervert the minds of boys with a tedious and delusive idealism. One grows up in the daydream that Scott has generated to discover it is a swindle; and one never forgives him.

And then we are given a convincing picture of strengths: He "belongs to that very small group of our novelists—Fielding and Jane Austen are the chief of them—who face life squarely. They are grown up. They do not cry for the moon." Pritchett's theme here is that it has been a mistake to think of Scott as primarily an historical novelist. He is a comic writer with insight into people as classes or types not as individuals, and he assimilates past history for his own uses in the present day. "He has the power to present the outside of a character and to work from the outside to the inside. But once inside, he discovers only what is generic. That is the fault." Though he was not prudish, he idealized women and put them on a pedestal. "But these idealisations also arise from that curious split in the puritan middle-class mind which had begun to unsex itself so that it might devote all its will to the adventure of getting on in the world

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of money or honour, leaving the warmer passions to the lower orders."

In the course of these longer essays we often do discern certain literary preferences, even if they do not add up to a program. Pritchett values creative "madness" of the sort that produces a Shakespeare or a Dostoevsky. He believes a novelist should show rather than explain. He cannot bear didacticism. These preferences are aired more fully than usual in the essay on George Eliot, which perhaps shares with the one on Twain the greatest distinction in the collection. Eliot's fudging of the treatment of sex, her iron ethic and her schoolmistressy preaching are stumbling blocks that Pritchett must get out of the way before he can praise her masterful accomplishments. Then, with an ironic epiphany, he observes: "There are two George Eliots: the mature, experienced, quiet-humoured Midlander who wrote the childhood pages of *The Mill on the Floss*; and the naive, earnest and masterly intellectual with her half-dozen languages and her scholarship." Pritchett prefers the instinctual truth to the somewhat musty wisdom. The essay's concluding paragraph sums it all up and is, for me, the best moment in the entire collection:

> There is no real madness in George Eliot. Both heavy feet are on the ground. Outside of *Wuthering Heights* there is no madness in Victorian fiction. The Victorians were a histrionic people who measured themselves by the Elizabethans; and George Eliot, like Browning and Tennyson, was compared to Shakespeare by her contemporaries. The comparison failed, if only because madness is lacking. Hysteria, the effect of the exorbitant straining of their wills, the Victorians did, alas, too often achieve. George Eliot somehow escapes it. She is too level-headed. One pictures her, in life, moralising instead of making a scene. There is no hysteria in *Middlemarch*; perhaps there are no depths because there is so much determination. But there is a humane breadth and resolution in this novel which offers neither hope nor despair to mankind but simply the necessity of fashioning a moral life. George Eliot's last words on her deathbed might, one irreverently feels, be placed on the title-page of her collected works: 'Tell them', she is reported to have said, 'the pain is on the left side.' Informative to the last and knowing better than the doctor, the self-made positivist dies.

As man of letters and critic, Pritchett can perhaps be placed by seeing him situated somewhere between T. S. Eliot and Frank Kermode. Eliot offered both a generalized critical program that lay inarticulate behind all his writing as well as explicit thematic kernels that generated individual essays. The results have been powerful, influential, long-lasting. And Eliot was a man of letters with veer-

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ings from and toward the academy. This affinity provided him with an intellectual training that controlled his works by means of self-consciousness, order, and a philosophic stance of magisterial pretensions. But élan vital was conspicuously absent. Kermode, on the other hand, comes off as an academic who is really a suppressed man of letters. Reading his highly crafted works, one senses that by sheer will power he has rigged somewhat casual meditations onto contrived theoretical skeletons made of a plastic that seems always on the verge of melting. In his *The Sense of an Ending*, for example, one (but apparently not everyone) feels that a mechanical theory of "apocalypse" has been desperately generated to support a narrative clotted with learning, allusiveness, and catchwords. Kermode (once described by E. D. Hirsch as "Kermodish") has heroically marshalled every resource at his disposal in order to be what presumably he feels a high-powered academic critic ought to be. As body builders pump iron by adding yet another ten pounds to their previous limits, Kermode pumps theories and ideas, adding more arabesques and allusions to an already overfraught Eiffel Tower. One suspects, however, that at heart there is a genial man of letters bursting to break free.

Pritchett has some of the strengths and weaknesses of both Eliot and Kermode, whom I see as antipodal. Lacking a program and thematics as well as a puritanic and clerical disposition, he exerts less concentrated force than a dour man of letters like Eliot, but unencumbered with the crushing apparatus of an academic like Kermode, he can convey a delight, a vitality, an enthusiasm for literature and life that Kermode might find just a little beneath his dignity. When I read Eliot, I am profoundly impressed, but feel guilty, irritated and hostile. When I read Kermode, I feel like a flea being suffocated under a patchwork quilt woven of steel wool. When I read Pritchett, I may be a little disappointed by his unrealized incipiencies and I would sometimes like to be oriented rather more rigorously, but I can't help recalling his self-reflective description of Stendhal as, "for all his enormous reading, a guesser who relied on dash, impulse, and wit." It is Pritchett's own dash, however, as an *homme sensuel moyen*—a.k.a. "Man of Letters"—that has me burning to get my hands on at least a dozen novels.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

BERT O. STATES is completing a book titled *The Rhetoric of Dreams* based, in part, on work that has appeared in *The Hudson Review*. . . . JOHN SIMON is a former theatre reviewer for *The Hudson Review* who now writes for *New York Magazine*. . . . GARY KRIST's* story in this issue is part of a work-in-progress, *The Garden State*, a collection of stories about his birthstate of New Jersey. . . . TED GIOIA* teaches at Stanford University and is currently writing a book on jazz and aesthetics. From time to time he performs as a jazz pianist in the San Francisco area. . . . MICHAEL VAN WALLEGHEN teaches writing at the University of Illinois. His most recent book, *More Trouble with the Obvious*, won the Lamont Award for 1980. . . . During the spring of 1986 MARK WILLIAMS* won a writer's grant from the Indiana Arts Commission on the basis of two short stories. He lives in Evansville, Indiana, where he sells real estate. . . . *Creature to Creature—An Animalculary*, sixteen poems by NANCY CARDOZO, with drawings by her husband, the late Russell Cowles, will be published in a limited edition next spring by *Confrontation*, the literary journal of Long Island University. . . . DEREK MAHON's most recent book of poems is *Antarctica* (Gallery Press, Dublin, 1985), for which he received the Marten Toonder Award. He was recently Writing Fellow at Trinity College, Dublin, and lives in County Cork, Ireland. . . . JANE BROX* has just begun the MFA program at Warren Wilson College. A former resident of Nantucket (Squam is located on the outer reaches of that island), she now lives in Watertown, Mass.

G. E. MURRAY is the former poetry columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. He spent part of this past summer and fall working as a communications consultant in Europe. . . . MAUREEN MULLARKEY* is a painter who writes on art and culture. . . . RICHARD HORNBY has just been made *The Hudson Review*'s Contributing Editor for Theatre. . . . WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD is working on a book about Randall Jarrell. . . . HARRY GOLDGAR is a lawyer in New Orleans. A former professor of English and comparative literature, he has been book editor at the Nashville *Tennessean* and was an editorial writer for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*. . . . ROBERT McDOWELL's first full-length collection of poetry, *Quiet Money*, will appear in March 1987 from Henry Holt and Company, Inc. With Mark Jarman, McDowell edits *The Reaper* and publishes poetry, fiction, plays, and criticism in Story Line Press. . . . HAROLD FROMM is currently at work on a book, *Alienating the Reader: Literary Politics and Critical Malpractice*, which will include the essays he is now producing on the Brontës (one on Charlotte is scheduled to appear in a future issue of *The Hudson Review*).

**Asterisk indicates a new contributor.*

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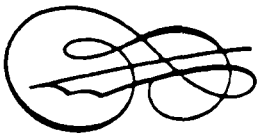

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IN THIS ISSUE:

We got married up in Bear Mountain in the middle of January. Eloped really, though we did end up convincing at least our mothers to drive up together in Mom's Omni for the ceremony. Neither of them cried. Mom called Dad right after and yelled at him for not coming, even if he did think I was too young. Then she and Mrs. Steinbock gave us a few packages wrapped in aluminum foil and got in the car. They never made it home, though; not in the Omni, at least. They stalled on 9W and couldn't turn the engine over. Ty had to go down and try to jump start them. I sat in bed in my new red satin nightgown, doing crosswords and laddergrams until Ty came back at 4 a.m.

—Gary Krist, "Ty and Janet," p. 566.

But isn't it the nature of great works of art to have a life of their own, beneath and beyond even their makers' awareness? I might go a step further and assert that any work of art that is no more than exactly what its author, consciously and deliberately, put into it may be craftsmanlike and effective, may even be of importance, but will not, cannot be great.

—John Simon, "Brothers Under the Skin: O'Neill and Williams," p. 553.

S[alle] and F[ishl] are advertised as Bad Boys. This keeps the customers coming because everyone loves a Bad Boy. No one is more susceptible than well-behaved grown-ups who still wish they had refused their spinach when they had the chance. In real life, the infatuation comes to its natural end when the Bad Boy makes off with your wallet. In art, there is no such brake on romance. Art encourages the swindle to go as far as your tolerance for humiliation allows. That is often a great distance. Fanning the insult are all those jabberwocks of art babble ready to burble "Genius! Prophet!" every time a painting pulls its knickers down in front of guests.

—Maureen Mullarkey, "The Figure and How It Fared," p. 619.

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